FABULOUS IDENTITIES

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FABULOUS IDENTITIES

Women's Fairy Tales in Seventeenth-century France

Patricia Hannon

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For the memory of my mother

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments 9

Preface 11

I. MEN DEFINING WOMEN IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE 20

II. *CORPS CADAVRES*: HEROES AND HEROINES IN THE TALES OF PERRAULT 46

III. *CORPS MÉTAMORPHOSÉS*: HEROES AND HEROINES IN THE TALES OF AULNOY 78

IV. MIRRORS OF INVENTION: TOWARDS AN AESTHETICS OF WOMEN'S FAIRY-TALE WRITING 122

V. THE SIGNATURE: REVISING DEFINITIONS 164

Afterword 210

Bibliography 218

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Preface

LITERARY FAIRY TALES

Skirting class boundaries while exceeding the parameters of both salon and academy, the fairy-tale vogue swept across France in the last decade of the seventeenth century. The twentieth-century public has long been acquainted with the tales of Charles Perrault, a learned man of bourgeois origin who, as a member of both the French Academy and the Petite Academy, worked closely for twenty years with Louis XIV's minister of culture Colbert.[1] Although literary historians and critics alike have canonized only Perrault's tales, it is now widely recognized that seventeenth-century fairy-tale writing was concentrated in the salon milieu and monopolized by aristocratic women and their elite associates, who authored two-thirds, or 74 of the 114 narratives published between 1690 and 1715. Tale writing may, in fact, have evolved from the oral recitations, which, according to Sévigné's letter of August 6, 1677, were popular at Versailles.[2] The link between orality and writing does appear to be corroborated by the *conteuse* Henriette de Murat, who alludes to the tale telling that enlivened her provincial salon at Loches.[3] However, with the exception of Scudéry's preface to her 1677 *Mathilde d'Aguilar*, there is little evidence that salon recitation preceded writing and publication.[4]

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[1] Perrault, for whom the king reserved at one time a private room at Versailles, wrote his tales after his idyllic relations with the monarchy had suffered a decline. Shortly after the death of Colbert and his replacement by Louvois, Perrault was dismissed from the Petite Academy but retained his seat in the French Academy. It was here that he launched the seventeenth-century version of the debate on the relative merits of ancient and modern literature with his "Le Siècle de Louis XIV," recited before the Academy in 1687, nearly ten years before the publication of the tales in 1696. The third dialogue of his later published *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes* (1688-97), which coincided with the publication of the tales, refers to French fairy tales, "nos contes de vieilles," as the modern version of Homeric poems. According to Perrault, contemporary tales, which attest to humanity's progress by expressing Christian rather than pagan values, are more suitable for contemporary society. See Mark Soriano's *Les Contes de Perrault: culture savante et traditions populaires*, for a detailed account of Perrault's relations with absolutism. See also the Slatkine edition of the *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes* (125-36) for Perrault's discussion of the place of fairy tales in the literature of the French nation.

[2] Sévigné's letter to her daughter reads as follows: "Mme. de Coulanges . . . voulut bien nous faire part des contes avec quoi l'on amuse les dames de Versailles: cela s'appelle les mitonner. Elles nous mitonna donc, et nous parla d'une île verte, où l'on élevait une princesse plus belle que le jour; c'était des fées qui soufflaient sur elle à

Despite the problematic relation between recounting and formal composition in Parisian high society, it is clear that the end-of-the century salon, reinvigorated at a time when the court was frozen in ceremony,[5] was the birthplace of the French literary fairy tale. Indeed, the very first tale narrative was published in 1690 by the most prolific practitioner of the genre, the *salonnière* Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy. When Aulnoy published "l'Ile de la félicité" as an embedded narrative in her best-selling novel *Histoire d'Hypolite, Comte de Duglas*, she inaugurated the aristocratic vogue of fairy-tale writing which was to last well into the eighteenth century.[6] Aulnoy was but one of the seven *conteuses* who, along with other aristocratic

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tout moment." *Lettres: 1676-1684*, II, 320-21.

[3] Murat's unpublished manuscript, "Ouvrages de Mme. la Comtesse de Murat," contains four references to fairy-tale writing and recitation (116; 216; 231; 278). It can be found at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 3471.

[4] Both Mary Storer and Raymonde Robert affirm that tale-writing followed oral recitation. See *Un Episode littéraire de la fin du XVIIe siècle: la mode des contes de fées* (13-14) and *Le Conte de fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVIIe siècle à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (84).

[5] Alain Viala has traced the evolution of the Parisian salon. The first phase (1610-50) is followed by an expansion which coincided with the aftermath of the Fronde (1650-55). After 1665, the salon cedes to the court, which becomes the focal point of *mondain* society. Finally, the aristocratic salon becomes once again influential during the last years of the century. *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, 133.

[6] The fashion of writing tales extended well into the eighteenth century, until 1778. However, women no longer dominated the genre as they had in the preceding century. Mary Storer's pioneering work cited above (1928) studies the first vogue of tale writing which she situates between 1685 and 1700. Jacques Barchilon's *Le Conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790: cent ans de féerie et de poésie ignorées de l'histoire littéraire* (1975), analyzes works from both the first and second periods. Teresa di Scanno considers only the first period in her *Les Contes de fées à l'époque classique, 1680-1715* (1975). A more recent study on the fairy-tale phenomenon is Raymonde Robert's work cited above (1982). According to Robert, there were two high periods of tale production, between 1690-1700 and from 1730-58 (307). The present study focuses on tales written during the first period, from 1690 to 1700. Mark Soriano's work, mentioned above (1968), devoted to Perrault, refers to other tale writers.

women and their entourage, transformed the salon into a stage for displaying the talents of women writers.[7]

Although mine is one of the first studies devoted to evaluating women's contribution to a genre that they dominated, scholars of the fairy tale including Mary Storer, Jacques Barchilon, Raymonde Robert, and Lewis Seifert have addressed the question as to why this particular literary production marked late seventeenth-century France. Mary Storer has proposed that the *conteurs* and *conteuses*, most of whom were at one time or another in disfavor with the monarchy, created through their tales an imaginary court that compensated for their real displeasure.[8] For Jacques Barchilon, who refers to the troubled economy, famines, peasant revolts, and curtailing of personal expenditures, the tales respond to an increasingly materialist society by yearning for an idealized past.[9] Raymonde Robert analyzes the first period of fairy-tale production not as an evasion,[10] but rather as a mirror that reflected aristocratic values, which, she further asserts, were in complete harmony with those of absolutism.[11] According to Robert, aristocrats appropriated the folktales of popular culture in order to affirm their own superior class identity.[12] Most recently, Lewis Seifert proposes that the tales, which annexed folklore in the interests of the modernist cause, created "a discursive counter-reality," one that compensated for the increasing pressures on elite culture. Addressing the issues of sexuality and gender, Seifert focuses on the tensions between nostalgic and utopic tendencies that are the hallmark of these tales.[13] Still other scholars of the genre such as Jack Zipes and Marina Warner have noted the subversive and utopic thrust of what Zipes designates as the "salon fairy tale," which disseminated alternative models of behavior while voicing critical opposition to the court of Louis XIV.[14]

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[7] In addition to Aulnoy (1650-1705), the women who published fairy tales between 1690-1715 include: Louise d'Auneuil (?1700); Catherine Bernard (1662-1712); Catherine Bédacier Durand (1650-1715); Charlotte-Rose Caumont de la Force (1650-1724); Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon (1664-1734); and Henriette-Julie de Murat (1670-1716). The men who wrote one-third of all the tales published during this period include: Jean-Paul Bignon (1662-1743); François-Timoleon de Choisy (1644-1724); François de la Mothe-Fénelon (1651-1715); Eustache Le Noble (1643-1711); Jean de Mailly (?-1724); François Augustin de Moncrif (1687-1700), Paul-François Nodot (?); Charles Perrault (1628-1703); and Jean de Préchac (1628-1703). Two tales belonging to this period were published anonymously.

[8] Storer, 253.

[9] Barchilon, XIII-XIV.

[10] Marcelle Maistre Welch has also argued that the tales represent a valorized present rather than a compensatory turn to the past. See "La Satire du rococo dans les contes de fées de Madame d'Aulnoy," 76.

[11] Robert, 228; 231; 327. Before 1715, asserts Robert, "aucun conte de fées ne contient . . . les attaques contre la société, la religion, la politique . . ." (233). Jean-Marie Apostolidès also views the tales as a faithful transcription of court ideology. However, unlike Robert, Apostolidès interprets fairy tales as expressing nostalgia for the first years of Louis XIV's reign. *Le Roi machine*, 141-43.

[12] Robert, 384.

While my contextualized readings of women's tales are indebted to the ever-growing corpus of fairy-tale scholarship, they do revise those aspects that rely heavily on the traditional view of the late seventeenth-century nobility as a dispossessed and relatively powerless class. Indeed, my analyses, which reveal a more complex notion of aristocratic identity that involves both ambition and an interest in exploring the nature of the autonomous self, can be related to recent historical studies. In his study of the education of the hereditary court nobility from the late sixteenth through the seventeenth centuries, Mark Motley has stressed the advantages that nobles derived from their participation in the reorganization of power accomplished under absolutism.[15] According to Motley, the notion of a domesticated aristocracy replaced by a rising bourgeoisie needs to be revised. Although one cannot deny that the increasing constraints of the civilizing process were reinforced under Louis XIV, one need also recognize that education, which enabled nobles to adopt new roles in a changing society, helped them maintain their power, albeit transformed. While it is true that aristocrats no longer enjoyed political and military independence, they negotiated a working compromise between their undiminished belief in hereditary superiority and the new social demands (6-15; 209-11).

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[13] *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France*, 1690-1715. Addressing women's prominent role in fairy-tale writing, Seifert writes: "While all of this suggests that the genre served as a compensation for the increasing pressure on women in late seventeenth-century France to retreat from the public sphere, it also suggests that the vogue of the fairy tale enabled the *conteuses* to assert and demonstrate their own vision of women's role in literary culture and society at large" (9). "In the context of the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, the increasing attacks on mondain culture, and the growing barriers against women in the public sphere, this brand of fantasy rewrites folkloric tradition in order to imagine a discursive counter-reality, an imaginary compensation for particular lived constraints of the present" (11). This interpretation of seventeenth-century fairy-tale writing modifies, without changing in essence, Seifert's earlier analyses of the genre. In his earlier work, Seifert stresses the nostalgic aspect of the tales, which he relates to the ideal of sociability as opposed to the emerging interest in sincerity. The "vast majority" of fairy tales are seen as a reaction against the increasingly indeterminate distinctions between the traditional social orders. Like other forms of what Seifert identifies as "aristocratic romanticism," tale production compensates for the loss of noble privilege by reaffirming an imaginary class identity based on group exclusivity and the aristocratic aesthetics of negligence, a refinement meant to appear "natural." See "Tales of Difference."

[14] Jack Zipes, "The Salon Fairy Tale," *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment: Classic French Fairy Tales*, 5-9; Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*. Zipes situates tale publication in the context of what he describes as the deteriorating social conditions brought on by wars, taxes, and failed crops, all of which were exacerbated by the increasing rigidity of the court under Maintenon's austere influence (5).

Jonathan Dewald's recent study of noble memoirs published between 1570 and 1715 likewise challenges certain assumptions involving our notions of seventeenth-century aristocratic identity.[16] Dewald, who warns against underrating the century's innovative intellectual trends, which were not confined to the nobility of the robe and the bourgeoisie,[17] focuses on the tensions and contradictions that defined noble conceptions of selfhood. Aristocrats were confronted with social pressures related both to the growing emphasis on lineage and to the increased conformity required by the state, which dictated the subordination of the individual to the group. However, the responses to these social imperatives included not only the oft-cited celebration of elite status but also the pursuit of personal ambition over the interests of dynastic integrity and the negation of the past inspired by the code of civility. For the latter, authored in part by those out of favor with the court, conceived of the self as a dynamic construct and thus encouraged a certain individualism in conflict with the group exclusivity cited by critics. Nobles at once adhered to the ideals of lineage that affirmed their privileges, and embraced the court and salon culture that threatened them. Moreover, the increasing pressures of conformity paradoxically fostered a growing interest in the personal: "Nobles explored alternatives to patriarchal ideology not because it was weakening its hold over them but because its hold over them was so very strong" (10).

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[15] *Becoming a French Aristocrat: The Education of the Court Nobility*, 1580-1715.

[16] *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*: France, 1570-1715. According to Dewald, literary studies have given "excessive weight to nobles' discouragement in the face of Louis XIV's absolutism" (12).

[17] Historians, writes Dewald, attribute hierarchical thought to the nobility, while ascribing innovative tendencies to the bourgeoisie (3). And yet, continues Dewald, when aristocratic memoirs and novels are compared to the writings of lawyers and other bourgeois, the former show a greater interest in the self as a construct (5).

FABULOUS IDENTITIES

In this book I examine the phenomenon of fairy-tale writing by focusing on the narratives of "Mesdames les fées," a conceit that designated salon women in general and the *conteuses* in particular. "Fée," which derives from "fata," "goddess of fate" (from "fatum," "fate"), is a most appropriate term for these salon habituées whose prophetic fables create an exploratory space to prepare aristocratic women and their associates for an as yet undefined future in a changing society. Since women's fairy tales exceed the closure of the past through the circulation of experimental identities, they signify a great deal more than the nostalgia with which they have been perennially associated. Paramount among the fabulous identities invented by these modern fairies or *salonnières* are those of the women writers, who, heeding at last Madeleine de Scudéry's injunction, "Mais si de votre main vous laissez quelques marques de ce que vous êtes,"[18] compose their own portraits to replace those bequeathed them.

Defining women, "*le sexe*" as the century dubbed them, was a national pastime with barely disguised political implications for both the state and the literary domain. My point of departure in chapter one involves a wide selection of prescriptive texts, drawn in part from both the *Querelle des femmes* and the later *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, all of which proposed to define female nature. A preliminary examination of the historical foundations of state formation in early modern France situates these disquisitions on the nature of women in the changing political and cultural landscape. I examine how these tracts reflect the restrictions on women's legal rights that accompanied absolutism's strengthening of patriarchal authority. The century's ubiquitous family-state metaphor draws freely upon traditions that identified women with the mysteries of the engendering body. I study these treatises of Cartesian persuasion as a theoretical attempt to master, through chastity and domesticity, the disorder of sexuality with which women were synonymous. Discussed in public forums and salons alike, the prescriptive literature on women played a vital role in what has been referred to as the construction of "modern subjectivity."[19] These texts increase our understanding of the symbiotic relationship between gender hierarchies and the project of state building that defined the century.

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[18] Madeleine de Scudéry, "Sapho à Erinne," *Les Femmes illustres*, 162.

Chapter two enriches the contextual frame for defining the distinctive contribution of women's tales by analyzing selected tales from Perrault's *Contes du temps passé*. The latter are read in the weave of the treatises on the nature of women, which included the academician's own *Apologie des femmes*. Perrault's tales, which in part enact the Cartesian hierarchies of these tracts, nonetheless express important dissonances that involve the tales' inscription of evolving social practices such as misalliance. Recalling the images of sexual inversion that proliferated in early modern Europe, the officially unsanctioned marriages of the *Contes* bespeak the conflict between the existing order and the emerging reconfiguration of power. Analysis reveals that Perrault's classically structured tales are often a site of disorder which is indissociable from the female body and closely linked to the growing power of the monetary. This chapter focuses on Perrault's female characters and highlights the role played by noble heroines in deflecting the violence wrought by change from the social body to the body of women. Although the representation of sexuality through the female body is subdued by chastity and even sacrifice, it resists outright subjugation and clings instead to its ambiguous status as simultaneously mastered and asserted.

Chapter three shifts the perspective from the Academy to the salon in order to focus on Aulnoy's alternatives to the rhetorical construction of the body as set out in the first chapter. I discuss how the confluence of Cartesian philosophy and the disquisitions on female nature problematized the notion of women's identity. Aulnoy responds to her century's disenchantment with the body through the seven metamorphosis tales I study. In contrast to what has been described as the closure of the Cartesian subject,[20] the *conteuse* invents a baroque self-in-process, an experimental site for the exploration of identities related to the body's enhanced status as a conduit for knowledge. Analysis of these tales of empowered heroines and diminished heroes shows a disdain for the illusions associated with the aristocratic romanticism so often cited to define the fairy-tale phenomenon. Instead, the vast majority of Aulnoy's anthropomorphic kings and princes, queens and princesses, who alternate between court ambition and country retreat, reject time and again the code of civility and the eminently social traditions of aristocratic love it espoused. Since metamorphosis provokes psychological as well as physical transformations, it is propitious for exploring personal autonomy; shape-shifting appropriates the rituals of the cult of sociability for private ends and erotic purposes. The potentially subversive thematics of love long attributed to women's novels of the period emphatically marks Aulnoy's fairy-tale narratives.

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[19] Anne Deneys-Tunney, *Ecritures du corps*, 35; 44. Deneys-Tunney's perspective on Cartesianism is discussed in ch. I.

[20] Judovitz's *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes* is discussed in ch. III.

Although the question of style is often avoided in discussions of early modern women writers, narrative analysis discloses how ideologies and formal textual properties intersect, thus shedding light on the cultural production of meaning. Chapter four, which reviews the critical appraisal of women's tales, proposes a contextualized aesthetics of their fairy-tale writing in the light of both the baroque aesthetic and the aristocratic aesthetic of negligence. Women's reflexive narratives, by virtue of their predilection for the *mise en abyme* of tale production and reception, may be conceived of as a theater for staging authorial identity. In response to the portrait handed down to them from the *Querelle des femmes*, salon women construct their own symbolic body in the form of their fairy tales, whose oft-cited length accommodates both dissent and conformity. In order to situate women's amplified texts in the larger literary and cultural frame, this chapter focuses on three women's tales while comparing them to the corresponding versions by men. The classical aesthetic of unity embraced by the latter contrasts with women's oxymoronic texts that unsettle literary and cultural hierarchies through the conflation of opposites. Women's ambivalent noble heroines, who are characterized at one and the same time by individual initiative and social conformity, are not unlike their creators, who explore an uncertain future without relinquishing the present order in which their privileged status is assured.

In chapter five, I focus on the emerging literary field in seventeenth-century France. The growing prestige of the professional author, together with the modernist promotion of women's cultural role, transformed the salon, often designated as the space of conversation, into the space of writing. This chapter examines the politics of anonymity and interior signatures in order to situate the tales within the century's tradition of women's writing. Women's fairy-tale poetics, a quasi-theoretical discourse enunciated in dedications and frame stories alike, is studied against the backdrop of classical poetics, itself linked to the prescriptive literature on female nature. Collective identity and claims to separate authorship coexist in these exhibitionist narratives that showcase an authorial persona situated at the interstices of the fairy tale and the historical novel. This final chapter, which analyzes the three remaining tales that correspond to versions by men, concludes that women's fairy tales at once espouse and exceed *mondain* ideologies.

Chapter One

Men Defining Women in Seventeenth-Century France

OF WOMEN, LITERATURE, AND STATE

From the *Querelle des alphabets*, begun in 1617 with the publication of Jacques Olivier's *Alphabet de l'imperfection et de la malice des femmes*, to Fénelon's 1696 treatise on women's education, *De l'éducation des filles*, seventeenth-century male theorists and writers never tired of discussing women, defining them, confining them to discursive parameters. In addition to providing topics for well-attended public lectures,[1] this prolific discussion on women took many literary forms including panegyrics, moral philosophy, conduct manuals, linguistic tracts, and apologias of modernity. In order to shine in salon society, one needed to be conversant in the discourse on women's superiority. Although it is difficult if not impossible to ascertain the true motives of those who engaged in the controversy, both advocates and adversaries displayed their rhetorical skills while seizing upon a social issue of great importance to their era. *"Le sexe*," as women were so suggestively named, became the focus of a body of literature that never lost sight of their procreative function at a time when all Europe envisioned the family as an essential ideological building block for consolidating state power. Seventeenth-century France, England, and Italy politicized the long-standing polemic on female nature in order to define women's social function in the newly emerging power system.

Men's writing on women was certainly not specific to the seventeenth century, but rather continued and reshaped a venerable tradition dating back to 1265, the year of Jean de Meung's misogynist *Roman de la Rose*. This four-century-long debate known as the *Querelle des femmes* was comprised of both antifeminist and feminist tracts, which drew upon Scripture and the ancient philosophers to prove or disprove the moral worth of women. Marc Angenot outlines three phases of the Quarrel which comprise Christine de Pisan's pro-women responses to Jean to Meung in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Cornelius Agrippa's defense of women in the sixteenth century, and the numerous feminist tracts that replied to Jacques Olivier's anti-women tirades in the seventeenth century.[2] Ian Maclean's analysis of the literature centered around the era's version of the Quarrel from 1610 to 1652 reveals a sharp decline in antifeminist texts, accompanied by a new form of feminism coinciding with the reign of Anne of Austria. However, although misogynist commonplaces are considered anachronistic around 1630, explicit and subtle references to Aristotle's "imperfect male" theory continue to inform the majority of writings, pro and con, on women. In particular, the Aristotelian association of men with form or mind, and women with matter or the body, is a persistent leitmotif.[3]

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[1] Discussions on women's nature, though admittedly theoretical, were not abstracted from the society that inspired them. Cultivated men and women eagerly attended public lectures on the topic given by Théophraste Renaudot's "Conférences du Bureau d'adresse."

Linda Timmermans' recent work on women's cultural role in seventeenth-century France, focuses on feminist writings while extending Maclean's treatment of the Quarrel to the latter part of the century.[4] Timmermans, who stresses the impact of the numerous defenses of female superiority on feminist expression throughout the era, distinguishes between the first half of the century, in which apologies of women advocated a certain equivalence between the sexes, and the latter part, which emphasized women's specificity and separateness from men.[5] According to Timmermans, the period following the Fronde and the defeat of heroic values was marked by increasing social conformity which stressed the traditional roles attributed to the sexes.[6] It is widely agreed that from the late sixteenth century onward, the Quarrel changed its focus so that the "defective male" argument gave way to valorizing women as vessels of procreation, clerical denigration ceded to highlighting women's subordination to men, and invectives against the vices inherent in female nature were replaced by attacks against urbane society women.[7]

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[2] See Angenot's *Les Champions des femmes: examen du discours sur la supériorité des femmes, 1400-1800,* 21-58.

[3] Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, 25-87.

[4] Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*.

[5] Timmermans affirms that "Il ne faut donc pas sous-estimer l'influence des apologies de la supériorité féminine sur tout le mouvement féministe du XVIIe siècle" (268). See also 259 and 265.

[6] See Timmermans, chs. V and VI, especially 352.

The developing centralized state witnessed a shift in misogynist attitudes that abandoned diatribes against evil feminine nature for the censure of society women who undermined family values. As legislation strengthened the family unit and diminished in theory women's considerable influence, the domestic woman was idealized by authors ranging from Perrault to Fénelon. However, the unmistakable puritanical tendencies that characterized the early modern state existed in tension with the sexual liberty practiced at both court and salon. And while feminists thought women's household and societal roles compatible, they, like women's detractors, valorized the engendering woman and accepted her subordinate position in the family household. Seventeenth-century fairy tales, written in the last decade of the century, appeared at a time when interest in defining women's "nature" so as to better designate their place in the newly reinforced hierarchy, was at its height.

This renewed interest in order is best understood in the light of recent historians' studies on the beginnings of state formation in early modern France. Carolyn Lougee has shown that these treatises on the nature of women are integrally related to the major social issues confronting seventeenth-century France. Women, the "soul" of society, gained new prominence as the social sphere was being transformed by the decline of heroic values and the accompanying emphasis on civility. Lougee defines those texts which favor the public role of women along with the acquisition of nobility as feminist. Feminist writings, in contrast to those tracts that celebrate marriage and women's private role, are allied with modernism through their attack on custom.[8] James Collins has recently noted that women's increasingly visible social presence was met with consistent legal efforts to subordinate them to the prerogatives of family and state. A case in point is the infamous *lettre de cachet*, which could order arbitrary imprisonment for recalcitrant wives and daughters.[9] In the same vein, Natalie Z. Davis has revealed how early modern Europe expressed the hierarchical relation between the king's developing state and its subjects by referring to the conjugal model of the subservient wife and the superior husband. In conjunction with this kind of symbolism, Davis relates an example from fourteenth-century England, when law described a wife's killing of her husband as petty treason rather than murder.[10]

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[7] On the evolution of the Quarrel, see Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, *Un Corps,un destin: la femme dans la médecine de la Renaissance*, 38; Joan Kelly, *Women, History and Theory*, 73.

[8] Lougee, *Le Paradis des femmes*, 5; 6; 208. On the distinction between feminist and antifeminist, see 21; 41; 69. For a critique of Lougee's distinction, see Timmermans, who argues that Lougee envisions feminism in a manner at once too global and too restrictive (328). Lougee notes the alliance between modernism and feminism on p. 12, and discusses the new social space for women on pgs. 31-32.

The assimilation of family, whose fathers were "little kings in the home," and state, whose king Louis XIV was "the father of his people," suggested, as Jonathan Dewald has pointed out, that absolutism participated in the natural order of things.[11] Historians agree with Mark Motley that increasing patriarchal authority, which in theory served to reinforce the boundaries between the sexes, was a hallmark of seventeenth-century France.[12] Joan Kelly and Natalie Davis have linked the consolidation of family and state to a certain loss of independence for aristocratic and bourgeois women in early modern Europe: women lost not only military, judicial and political powers, but also certain rights concerning property and dowries. Women's diminished legal status was a direct result of state expansion, which appropriated economic, military and other functions that were administered by men.[13]

Sarah Hanley has, in fact, shown how women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were subject to increasingly confining legislation. Hanley describes the "Family-State compact," which united the king and his counselors, interested in state building, with the legists, members of the Parlement of Paris, interested in a consolidated family to further their advancement. In these two centuries, the Parlement issued *arrêts* which strengthened regulations on marriage, separation, reproduction, and inheritance.[14] Since, as the French edict of 1666 stated, "marriages are the fecund sources from which the strength and grandeur of states is derived," reproduction, and the private lives of women, became issues of public concern.[15] For, as Wendy Gibson has observed, a high birth rate was essential to state interests, which included expanding industry and, especially, filling the army ranks necessary for Louis' costly wars.[16]

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[9] *The State in Early Modern France*, 31; 154-55; 156.

[10] Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 127 and note.

[11] Motley's *Becoming a French Aristocrat* cites Father Cordier as thus describing the father's role (36). Peter Burke's *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* likewise notes the "language of paternalism and patriarchy" that depicts Louis XIV, 130. See also Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*, 78.

[12] See Motley, 15; 51; 157; 210; and Dewald, 78.

[13] Kelly, 67; 78, and Davis, 126.

[14] Hanley, "Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France," 8-9.

Family interests vied for attention in the eyes of the newly developing state with those of literature. Alain Viala has traced the founding of the official academies that legitimated literature and the writer's role in state formation.[17] And while literature and politics were inseparable in seventeenth-century France, literature was likewise indissociable from the woman question: the century that produced *L'Art poétique* believed that both women and literature had an essential civilizing social function. Therefore, it is not surprising that the subject of literature intersects with the topic of women, whose theorized familial and literary roles were often in conflict.

Addressing the intimate relation between women and literature in the context of state interests, Timothy Reiss describes how the last quarter of the century witnessed a revival of the polemic on women, which existed alongside and contributed to the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*. The latter debated the merits of ancient and modern literature while simultaneously aligning its arguments with attacks against (the ancients) and defenses of (the moderns) women. Reiss argues that the latter part of the century, when women engaged in fairy-tale writing, was marked by contemporaries' distinction between male and female reason: the Cartesian philosopher Malebranche, for one, claimed in 1674 that women were incapable of abstract reasoning. For Malebranche as well as for countless feminists and antifeminists, female reason at once destined women to be consumers of literature written primarily by men, and confined them both to the private, domestic realm and to minor genres.[18]

This positing of separate male and female reasoning can be related to what Lougee identifies as "a breakdown in rationalist epistemology," which she links to feminist writings that valorize women's intuitive, as opposed to rational, knowledge.[19] While both Timmermans' and Reiss' analyses agree that writings on women in the latter part of the century widened the theoretical gap between the sexes, Timmermans, citing Marc Fumaroli, concludes that the literary role assigned women extended beyond that of Reiss' excluded audience.[20] In Timmermans' view, women's role in the reception of texts was prominent in the beginning years of the century, but complemented in later years by the emerging notion of the woman writer in the contemporary consciousness.[21] Indeed, Timmermans places women's fairy-tale writing in the context of the era's reflection on the female author, a phenomenon I will delineate in the following chapters of this study.

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[15] The edict of 1666 is quoted in Hanley, 12. On p. 25, she writes: "women executed the civil task which touched the public interest—the reproduction of families . . . ."

[16] *Women in Seventeenth-Century France*, 71.

[17] *La Naissance de l'écrivain.* Viala's thesis is discussed in ch. V.

[18] See *The Meaning of Literature*, 201-02; 211.

[19] See Lougee, 31-32.

Theoretical texts defining women can thus be considered an intellectual pastime of seventeenth-century France, where women's place was not unrelated to questions of state and of literary politics. While critics have not neglected these writings, their unquestioned impact on the mentalities of the times warrants their further examination. In order to delineate woman's place as defined by men's and particularly women's fairy tales, I will first examine the place assigned women in the literature associated with the era's version of the *Querelle des femmes* and its avatars, including certain aspects of *the Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, and various moralist texts. Although women including Marie de Gournay, Madeleine de Scudéry, and Anna-Maria van Schurman contributed to this body of works, the clear majority of theoretical feminist and antifeminist tracts were authored by men.[22] I focus on a selection of these works that span the century and include both the initiating misogynist tirade, *Alphabet de l'imperfection et de la malice des femmes*, and the responses of "religious" and "urbane" feminists as classified by Timmermans.[23] Maclean and especially Timmermans have emphasized the contradictory nature of these tracts in which resistant commonplaces derived from medieval theology coexist with innovative notions that herald the enlightenment.

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[20] In *L'Age de l'éloquence*, Fumaroli discusses women's central role in court society. Women were a point of reference for both the *nouveaux doctes* (purists opposed to the older humanist culture) and those authors who deferred to women in matters of language and taste.

[21] See Timmermans, 177; 217.

[22] In " 'De mères en filles': les manuels d'éducation sous l'Ancien Régime," Colette Winn notes that portraits of ideal women have generally been authored by men. Certain works of this nature are attributed to women, but analysis shows that most were written by men.

[23] Timmermans situates "religious feminism" in the first half of the era and associates it with the works of Jacques Du Bosc, François de Grenaille, and Pierre Le Moyne. Urbane or "worldly feminism" involves the latter part of the century and includes Poullain de la Barre and Charles Perrault (298-303).

My own perspective concentrates on a persistent thread of images and notions of women, leading from the *Alphabet*, through the writings of religious and worldly feminists, to the works of the later moralists and the fairy tales of Charles Perrault. Despite their diversity, the majority of these texts honor the hierarchical order that founds family and state, the former of which, in the words of the progressive feminist Poullain de la Barre, is grounded on the "reasonable submission" of the wife, Pierre Le Moyne's "engendering principle," to the husband[24]. While one may agree with Timmermans that seventeenth-century feminists such as Jacques Du Bosc and Poullain de la Barre thought women's domestic and extra-domestic roles compatible, nearly all writings on women imposed a certain immobility on the female body, burdened by the weight of "les loix de Dieu & les loix du Monde," which, according to Pierre Le Moyne, "l'environnent de tous cotez."

ON THE NATURE OF WOMEN

First published in 1647 and reedited 17 times until 1672, Le Moyne's *La gallerie des femmes fortes* eloquently conveys seventeenth-century women's confinement within social strictures, and suggests that they represent that point in a continuum where ideologies are theoretically concentrated in the form of social prescriptions and prohibitions:

> De plus il est du Coeur de la Femme comme des Rivières qui sont contraintes & resserrées, & qui n'ont qu'une pente par où la décharge leur est libre. La Conscience et l'Honneur, la Pudeur & la Crainte, les loix de Dieu & les loix du Monde, sont les obstacles qui l'environnent de tous costez, & il ne se peut répandre sans les rompre, ni les rompre sans une violence extraordinaire. (149)

Reflecting the antithetical logic that informs the Quarrel, Le Moyne's hypothetical women, the "Rivières . . . contraintes & resserrées," held in check by "la Conscience & l'Honneur, la Pudeur & la Crainte," are defined in contrast to men, "ces Rivières vagues, qui n'ont ni bords ni levées, & qui ont cent ruisseaux ouverts par où elles se déchargent" (149). Diametrical opposition sustains hierarchy, which as François de Grenaille points out in *L'Honneste Mariage* (1640), maintains both God's and men's laws: "Les loix des hommes s'accordent fort bien pour ce point avec celles de Dieu quand elles constituent les femmes en puissance de leurs maris" (234).

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[24] Poullain, *De l'égalité des deux sexes*, 54-55; Le Moyne, *Peintures morales* (Paris, 1640), quoted in Reiss, 202.

Women's inferior position in the marriage hierarchy results from their identification with the body as opposed to the mind, which, since Plato and Aristotle, had been equated with men. Indeed, the dominant focal point of this profusion of seventeenth-century texts defining women is the female body, the ubiquitous "engendering principle," symbolically enclosed within its "modesty," while literally confined to the interiors of household, hospital, prison, and poorhouse.[25] Granted, the more enlightened defenders and even detractors of *le sexe* eschewed the blatant antifeminist statements of the vituperative Jacques Olivier.[26] However, although Olivier's portrait of the "corps brutal," the lascivious female, ceded in time to the domesticated "principe qui engendre," the authority of the Western philosophic tradition, which had perennially equated women with reputedly inferior sensuality, weighed heavily upon both pro- and anti-women literature of the era. Le Moyne's insightful rendition of women's social predicament bears the negative traces of this tradition.

Clearly, both sons and daughters experienced the repressive consequences of expanding state powers. Nevertheless, historians concur that women's theoretically subordinate role, intimately related to their corporeal identity, singled them out for constraint.[27] Insofar as Le Moyne depicts women as the locus where fragments of patristic, legal, philosophical, and medical discourses converge, his "rivières contraintes et reserrées" serve as an index of social repression.

"La Femme est un Animal si difficile à connoître," writes Olivier, "que le plus bel esprit du monde n'en sçauroit jamais donner une définition assurée" (57). Yet, defining women was all the vogue, and although these descriptions rarely emulated Olivier's explicit equation of women with brute nature, nearly all obliquely referred to what he called women's "*impudicité*," when they enumerated "*pudicité*," "*pudeur*," and "*modestie*" as innately feminine qualities. According to both foes and allies, woman's traditionally devalued position in the pervasive body/mind hierarchy was at times reassessed and even displaced, but resistant to any genuine transformation. The era's feminists unanimously agree that chastity is women's most glorious attribute.[28] Although Poullain argues in his second work for women's greater sensuality while rejecting the notion that they are innately chaste,[29] this position is contradicted in the previously published *De l'égalité des deux sexes*.[30]

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[25] Numerous partisans of women including Poullain de la Barre, Charles Perrault, and François de Sales recommended that ladies perform charitable work outside the home by ministering to the sick and the indigent.

[26] Misogynist writings were popular among the lower strata in the cities and provinces from the sixteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. They were published in the form of small brochures and were often sold at fairs. See Angenot, 67-68.

[27] Collins, for one, states that although authorities had other targets, they "singled out women for repression (33)."

Cognizant of the prejudice inherent in the orthodox assimilation of women with corporeality, the vast majority of claims for female superiority sought to elide this bias by identifying women with an ideally chaste body enshrined in modesty and synonymous with silence. If the body be unspeakable, best that it should remain mute. A case in point is Adam Scaliger Lescale's *Alphabet de l'excellence et perfection des femmes* (1631), which asserted that women possess a certain "mute eloquence," that is, they persuade through their eloquent beauty, without speaking. Lescale proceeds to illustrate his claim by citing the example of Phryné, who instead of pleading her case to the Athenian judges, "se présenta toute nüe devant ses juges: O puissance admirable de la Rhétorique tacite des femmes!" exclaims the feminist (84). In Lescale's tacit rhetoric, women are outside language, but very much inside the body with which they are identified.

From the Renaissance onward women's advocates conceptualized only female beauty while lacking a corresponding esthetic standard for men.[31]

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[28] See Angenot, 18. See also 55-58 for an enumeration of feminists preceding Poullain who based their claims of female superiority on women's greater chastity.

[29] According to Poullain's *De l'excellence des hommes contre l'égalité des sexes*, custom alone obliges women to repress the expression of their passion. Women's acclaimed chastity is motivated by their fear of social blame. See Angenot, 64.

[30] Women's greater timidity is an admirable trait because women's characteristic chastity derives from it (100). Describing women, Poullain claims that "Les moindres équivoques blessent leurs oreilles, et elles ne peuvent soufrrir la veuë de tout ce qui choque la pudeur" (29). On page 41 of the same work, Poullain asserts women's greater cleanliness, a natural quality that accounts for their superior gifts of household management.

[31] Angenot, 120.

The inexistant notion of a complementary male beauty serves to sharpen the focus on female sexuality. Phyrné's mute eloquence inspires her judges to speak in her stead, perhaps in much the same way that women's apologists felt called upon to defend *le sexe*.[32] Women's "tacit rhetoric," the surprise of beauty beyond logic and language, places her unambiguously to the side of sensuality, whereas her male judges assume the position of intellectual authority. This distribution according to gender is pursued, if less imaginatively, in François de Grenaille's *L'Honneste Mariage*.

"L'homme est le chef de la femme," assures Grenaille, "& elle doit suivre ses mouvements, comme dans le corps, la teste a intendance sur tous les membres" (233). Both men's and God's laws concur that "l'homme semble estre l'âme de la femme. Cette matière donc exige sa forme" (322). Like Lescale's Phryné, Grenaille's ideal woman comes to life when endowed with the "principe de mouvement," the animating male gaze, which is itself a product of the very network of social factors from which it constructs women's identity. Pierre Le Moyne's *La Gallerie des femmes fortes* (1647), likewise subscribes to gender-inflected hierarchy when, after asserting men's and women's complementarity as two halves of one body, describes men's deferent manners toward women as "ceux que le corps reçoit de la teste" (I, 147). According to Le Moyne, women are obligated by "devoirs plus naturels & plus nécessaires du corps à la teste, & de l'Accessoire au Principal" (II, 107).

Women's accessory status is clearly perceptible in La Bruyère's *Caractères*, which highlights their ornamental beauty. "L'Accessoire va après le principal," reminds Richelet's 1690 dictionary. Feminine beauty, eminently corporeal, is at once opposed and subordinated to masculine intellect: "L'air spirituel est dans les hommes ce que la regularité des traits est dans les femmes" (1694 ed., 32: 355). La Bruyère exemplifies those theorists who, having equated women with the body, proceed, consciously or unwittingly, to ensure the latter's dependent status: "Il faut juger les femmes depuis la chaussure jusques à la coiffure exclusivement, à peu près comme on mesure le poisson entre queue et tête" (5: 108). The Gallic tradition of satiric misogyny illustrated by La Bruyère—which resounds comically in the unsuspecting Lescale's portrayal of Phryné before her judges—is countered by numerous theorists including Le Moyne, Poullain, and Nicolas Faret, who seek to redeem the female body as the originator and nurturer of mankind. Yet this attempt to rehabilitate women, however sincere, only reworked existing notions of gender identities and, in the long run, served to justify the social destiny assigned to both men and women.

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[32] Angenot, for one, claims that women's champions speak in the name of a sex which has been condemned to mutism (161).

Le Moyne and Poullain concur with Faret's *L'Honneste homme, ou l'art de plaire à la cour* (1630), which encourages respect for women, who, Faret says, have borne us for a duration of nine months. Le Moyne describes how infants "prennent goutte à goutte dans leurs ventres, les diverses teintures du Bien et du Mal, détrempées de leur sang & meslées à leurs humeurs" (II, 272). "Les précieuses matières," he continues, "doivent venir de la carrière & de la mine: & les sujets nobles et capables de belles formes, se doivent faire dans le ventre de leur Mère" (II, 273). Le Moyne's imagery of the womb as "carrière" and "mine," defined by Richelet as a "chambre souterraine," suggests a Demeter-like earth-mother divinity. However, the awesome powers conjured up by the mythological figure lose their resonance to the degree that Le Moyne's mother becomes enmeshed in seventeenth-century domesticity.

Poullain's *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (1673) is one of the many feminist tracts that underscore the social dimension of motherhood, while diminishing its mystery, without, however, expelling it. "Je ne sçay," says Poullain, "même si à regarder leur employ ordinaire, qui est de nourrir et d'élever les hommes . . . elles ne sont pas dignes du premier rang dans la société civile" (50). Women, who govern the household and supervise children's education, contribute greatly to family and state (42). Although Poullain proclaims that "l'esprit n'a point de sexe" (59), his women are distinguished by a surplus of sexuality inherent in their very nature. In fact, such valorizing via biology appears to controvert the asexual mind that Poullain would have us embrace. Nonetheless, the most eminent feminist of the age differentiated women from men by alluding to an "Appange essentiel à leur sexe" (90), the womb paraphrased as essential difference, "quelques organes dans l'un qui ne soient pas dans l'autre" (91). The mystery of the female body is that of the engendering mother: "sans parler de la fabrique intérieure de leur corps . . . c'est en elles qui se passe ce qu'il y a de plus curieux à connoistre, sçavoir, comment se produit l'homme" (94).

Poullain's respect for women as precious yet enigmatic intermediaries of procreation affiliates him with the sixteenth-century feminist Cornelius Agrippa, who rehabilitated women through a non-ethereal mysticism based on the mysteries of the female body.[33] Enshrouding the maternal body in mystery was a key feminist response to misogyny inspired in part by medical texts of the second half of the sixteenth century. Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore's study on the representation of women in Renaissance medicine examines how the defective male theory gradually ceded to uterine-centered theories focusing on the enigma of gestation; medical texts of the latter part of the sixteenth century defended women against the traditional prejudice associated with their bodies by valorizing the womb as the essence of all femininity.

Such was the perspective of Paracelsus, influenced by the Neo-Platonists.[34] However, Berriot-Salvadore concludes that the evolution of medical discourse, which veered away from the theory of women's cold and damp humors to highlight instead the gestation process, continued to obscure the "real" female body; scientific facts, moral speculation, and age-old superstition intersected to create yet another male rendition of femininity (199). In the final analysis, this potentially emancipating theory did little more than transpose the theory of temperaments to another symbolic register, which, like the preceding one, served to justify social ideologies (202). Moreover, the transposition of registers often failed to dismantle negative preconceptions. Woman's weak constitution, a putative result of her cold and damp humors,[35] resurfaced when medical theorists ascribed all female ills to the womb: "Toutes les maladies des femmes proviennent de la matrice," warned Paraclesus.[36]

"Il y a sur le reste du corps des choses curieuses," cautions Poullain, "mais dont il ne faut parler qu'en passant." Poullain's circumspection is understandable in light of the code of propriety which severely limited the century's theoretical reflexion on human sexuality. Feminists could argue that maternity proved women's superiority since the latter were entrusted with the conservation of the species. The allusions to childbirth bypassed the sexual issue inasmuch as a firmly entrenched tradition, reinforced by

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[33] See Angenot, 29.

[34] Berriot-Salvadore, 38-42.

[35] The theory of the temperaments is discussed later in this chapter.

[36] Quoted by Berriot-Salvadore, 44. François Mauriceau's *Les Maladies des femmes grosses et accouchées* (Paris, 1668) agrees with Paraclesus: "La matrice est la cause de la plupart des maladies des femmes." Quoted in Berriot-Salvadore, 45. Poullain himself, who views the body as a machine subject to painful disorders that threaten mental equilibrium, implies that the experience of childbirth can alter the female mind. See Poullain, 74-75.

Neo-Platonic influences and court gallantry, thought love and marriage incompatible; procreation was a duty borne by both husband and wife in the interests of family lineage and state prerogatives. Sexual pleasure and marriage were oxymorons for many of Poullain's contemporaries.

The taboo on female sexuality outside procreation only intensified the aura of mystery surrounding *le sexe*. In consequence, a veritable mythology imbuing women with magical powers infused feminist writings. Some advocates attributed women's birthgiving to parthenogenesis, others believed in pregnant women's ability to ingest poisonous substances to no ill effect, and still others thought women possessed of thaumaturgic powers.[37] Poullain, for one, held that women were natural-born healers (36). Such were the guises assumed by a Freudian "return of the repressed."

When one reads the misogynist theorists alongside prominent feminists, the former's evident prejudices help reveal those which are latent in the latter. What is merely implied in Poullain becomes explicit in Antoine de Courtin's *Traité de la jalousie* (1685). Although critics understandably contrast Courtin with Poullain, Courtin's overt subordination of women on the grounds of their "corps infirme et foible," is subliminally present but repressed in Poullain. "Le corps de la femme est sujet à des infirmitez," states Courtin, "dont le corps de l'homme est exempt: elles passent la moitié de leur vie à porter des enfants." Courtin argues that these "infirmitez" are responsible for "une faiblesse comme naturelle dans les femmes" (308), and concludes that "l'habitude du corps passe à l'âme . . . comme le corps de la femme est foible, l'esprit est foible aussi" (309).

The antifeminist Courtin's ideal woman shares the same maternal and submissive wifely role as her feminist-created counterpart. Owing to her sexual role in procreation, Courtin's maternal model is promptly confined to the house and without further ado subordinated to her husband: "or la soumission des femmes est une coutume naturelle, nécessaire & immuable de même que celle par laquelle les femmes accouchent," assures Courtin. However, wives' "natural" subjugation does not dispense their husbands from emotional attachment: "les maris doivent aimer leurs femmes comme leur propre corps" (76), advises Courtin. "Le mary aime sa femme comme son propre corps" (526), but only subsequent to transcribing that body according to the unconditional language of "*bien-séance*," mute chastity.

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[37] Angenot, 112-17. The mythology that emerged around women's menstrual blood, which is variously described as noxious and medicinal, is well documented. See Angenot, 115-17.

Female sexuality—male sexuality is disturbingly absent—albeit necessary to both family and state, must be held at a safe distance.

Clearly, the era's male speculation on women departs only in degree from the theories prevalent in antiquity: women are synonymous with the body. Yet, the exclusive focus on female beauty and sexuality to the exclusion of their male counterparts is surely an outstanding difference that distinguishes the seventeenth century from the preceding ones. Men relate to the body through what Courtin calls "meriage" [sic], a conjugal society based on women's reproductive function. She who encloses life shall be enclosed and kept at a paradoxical distance in the intimacy of her master's house. Household protocol analogically transposes sensuality's putative inferiority vis a vis the intellect into the husband's domination of the wife. St. François de Sales' admonition to women: "Aimez vos maris comme l'Eglise aime son Sauveur,"[38] is echoed in Courtin's idealized women who are "soumises à leurs maris, comme au Seigneur." Lest one forget, "le mari est le chef de la femme comme Jésus-Christ est le chef de l'Eglise, qui est son corps."[39]

Although such hyperbolizing of husbandly dominance is in large part avoided in the era's polemic, neither feminists nor antifeminists question wifely subordination. Therefore, when the self-declared women's advocate Perrault writes "La Femme en son époux aime à trouver son maistre," he appears to agree with the antifeminist Bossuet's assertion that woman is "obligée de se faire un maître en se mariant."[40] Grenaille optimistically circumvents the question of subordination with a paradox: "leur subjection à leurs maris est le dernier degré de leur plus parfaite élévation" (333). As previously noted, Poullain himself assumes that the relation between spouses is governed by "reasonable submission," all the while assuring that "hors les choses raisonnables, on ne peut contraindre une femme de se soumettre à son mary" (54-55). Insofar as these "reasonable things" are defined according to dominant social values, they are surprisingly close to the notion of *vraisemblance*—what the public considers possible—and quite distant from Poullain's espousal of cultural relativism. Despite his modernist perspective and its accompanying attack on custom, Poullain heeds the social imperatives of his time and stops short of dismissing traditional conjugal hierarchy.[41]

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[38] De Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote*, 231.

[39] Courtin, *Traité de la jalousie,* 78.

[40] Perrault, *Apologie des femmes*, 9; Bossuet, *Oeuvres complètes,* XII, 418. Bossuet describes women as "le sexe qui est née pour obéir." (XXIII, 528).

The delineation of the marriage hierarchy is typically interwoven with the notion of the family-state equivalence. The master's house, dubbed by Grenaille, Le Moyne, Courtin and Fénelon a "petit Estat," "petite république," "petite société," or "Etat monarchique," is indissociable from Louis XIV's Versailles. Both houses are built on the maternal body, legitimated by ecclesiastical and civil laws to undergird the social structure. "La famille est l'image, la source & le modelle de la république," writes the antifeminist Pierre Charron. The liberal feminist Jacques Du Bosc, agrees that marriage is the first society and the foundation of all commerce. Another advocate of women, Grenaille, follows suit and argues that marriage is "la fontaine du genre humain & le premier noeud de la société civile." He is seconded by the feminist Jacques Pradon, who considers marriage to be the bedrock of the state's welfare. As for Le Moyne, he reiterates the important public dimension of family life cited by his colleagues: "la disposition du Public se fait de la disposition des Familles & les Familles sont comme des Estats particuliers, & des Royaumes abregez, où regnent les Femmes."[42] Family and state are united through women's domesticated sexuality, which Courtin predicts, will "peupler de citoyens la société des hommes" (113). Women's very nature will determine her functions, described here by Poullain:

> Si on demande à chaque homme en particulier ce qu'il pense des femmes en général . . . il dira sans doute qu'elles ne sont guère propres qu'à élever les enfants dans leur bas âge, et à prendre le soin du ménage. (17)

Poullain is of course berating the parochial point of view held by those of his contemporaries who resembled the antifeminist family tyrants derided by Molière. Chrysale, the bourgeois head of household in *Les Femmes savantes*, was among those slaves of custom whom Poullain sought to enlighten:

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[41] Poullain's conservatism is in evidence when he speaks of women's entry into the professions: "si les choses sont dans un état qu'elles ne peuvent plus estre admises aux Emplois, elles pourraient au moins en connoistre les fonctions, et juger si on les remplist dignement" (84). Poullain refers here to women's designated function as arbiter, which is delineated in Reiss.

[42] Charron, *De la sagesse*, 610; Du Bosc, *The Accomplish'd Woman*, 40; Grenaille, *L'Honneste Mariage*, 26; Pradon, *Réponse à la satire du Sieur Dxxx,* 4-5; Le Moyne, *La Gallerie des femmes fortes,* 271.

Former aux bonnes moeurs l'esprit de ses enfants
Faire aller son ménage, avoir l'oeil sur ses gens,
Et régler la dépense avec économie,
Doit être son étude et sa philosophie. (II, 7; 573-76)

Although women's champions such as Du Bosc sought to expand their activities beyond the household, none questioned the importance of women's domestic role.[43] The religious feminists Du Bosc, Grenaille, and Le Moyne advocated study for women on the grounds that educated ladies would better fulfill their moral obligations. However, housework was considered a necessity whereas study passed for an entertaining pastime.[44] The antifeminist Charron unambiguously states that "Vaiquer & estudiez à la Mesnagerie, c'est la plus utile & honorable science & occupation de la femme" (622). In much the same vein, his colleague Jacques Goussault notes with satisfaction that the wife naturally "prend un soin particulier de son ménage."[45] More imaginatively, Poullain transforms household drudgery into yet another proof of female ingenuity: "Les filles sont capables de conduire une maison à l'âge où les hommes ont encore besoin de maistre" (41). However, the oppressive aspects of housewivery resound in Courtin's claim that women should be "bien reglées, chastes, attachées à leur ménage" (79). Indeed, Courtin's evocative association of household occupations and chastity suggests their common function of containment. His eloquent "attachées à leur ménage" emerges again in Grenaille's "Il faut qu'elles s'attachent à une maison,"[46] as well as in Le Moyne's "Les liens de la bien-séance qui l'attachent au logis" (268).

To be sure, the restrictive code of *bienséance* or propriety encompasses chastity, defined by Grenaille as "une propriété essentielle au sexe" (260), and by Le Moyne as an "ornement naturel . . . propre au second Sexe" (238). Chastity, the sine qua non attribute of femininity by consensus of apologists and misogynists alike, that quality "qui leur est si particulière," according to Poullain (100), is at once enhanced and intimated by the private domain of the home. Having identified women with the body and by extension sexuality, seventeenth-century male theorists proceed to envelop her in the silence of chastity, while enclosing her, as if for safe measure, in secret interior spaces. The effects of the discourses defining the nature of women are concentrated in the domestic sphere. Grenaille and Le Moyne are among those feminists who eloquently express the repression of women, confined to the house where they assume their prescribed roles of wife, mother, and guardian of the hearth. In fact, the conjugal habitat is likened to a house of detention: Grenaille's wife, for one, is "toujours en prison dans sa maison même," (241). Here, in the secrecy of what Jean Pic calls her "glorieuse retraite,"[47] her eminently visible body—*le sexe*—is at once concealed and integrated into a network of social constraints. Clearly, an important concern of even the most enlightened and subtle writings on women is the spatial delineation of gender identities.

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[43] According to Natalie Davis, "up to the late eighteenth century, the patriarchal family is not challenged as such even by the most searching critics of relations between the sexes" (142).

[44] For a succinct summary of religious feminists' views of women's household and social obligations, see Timmermans, 288-303.

[45] See Goussault, *Le Portrait d'une femme honnête, raisonnable et véritablement chrétienne,* 23.

[46] Grenaille, *L'Honneste Veuve*, 22.

When Le Moyne distinguishes between male and female virtue, his formulation is contextually grounded. In contrast to men's virtue, which extends along a vista including "les Eglises & les Tribunaux, les Villes & la Campagne, la Cour & le Dessert," women's virtue is synonymous with harshly restricted mobility. The virtue of women is privately circumscribed, "une Vertu enfermée & sédentaire, une Vertu qui ne sort point dehors sans rougir" (267). From the outset of the "Querelle des alphabets" initiated by Olivier, that "Animal si difficile à connoistre" was enjoined to stay in her place. The literature on women is rife with the image of the house-bound female— "qu'elle ne sorte point du logis," admonishes Olivier (241). Once again, the theorist De Vassetz's differentiation of the sexes recalls the antithetical geography of Le Moyne's constrained (female) and expansive (male) rivers: "Un fils de famille peut entreprendre un voiage, passer les mers, aller aux extremitez du monde, mais une fille ne doit pas même sortir de sa maison sans ordre."[48]

A poetics of enclosure bordering on immobility and strongly suggestive of repression characterizes many a hypothetical space assigned women by their male contemporaries. The contradictory Le Moyne, whose perceptive expression of women's predicament is intertwined with preconceptions that he simultaneously disavows and espouses, here recapitulates what for many of his contemporaries was the "natural" social destiny of women: "Elles se doivent tenir à la distribution que la Nature & le Droit ont faite, & que la Coustume a receue: & se contenter de la part qui leur a esté assignée dans l'oecomomie & dans le ménage" (212).[49] The pervasive imagery of women's confinement to private spheres influences even the most emancipated of theorists such as Poullain and Du Bosc. In large part, when women's advocates of the ilk of François de Sales and Charles Perrault open the doors of the conjugal house, they do so with the intention that their women follow the straight and narrow path to more interior spaces.

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[47] Pic, *Discours sur la bien-séance*, 259.

[48] De Vassetz, *De l'obligation que les peres et meres ont d'instruire leurs enfants*, 67-68.

De Sales was among the first moralists who asserted that women's religious, domestic and worldly obligations were compatible. Together with Poullain and Perrault, he recommended that women of high social standing engage in charitable works that included visiting the sick and destitute. Poullain, who had only praise for these women, compared their likes to the heroines described in the century's compendia of illustrious women: "Ce sont proprement ces filles là des quelles il faloit enrichir la galerie des femmes fortes" (39). Perrault too believed that women should avoid "les lieux de plaisir" and frequent instead hospitals and lowly dwellings to minister to the bedridden and the impoverished. In order to find virtuous women, Perrault advises his contemporaries, "Va dans les Hospitaux," where uncounted numbers of honorable women console the dying, "Malgré l'air infecté de leur triste demeure." In pursuit of women of integrity, "Descends dans des caveaux, monte dans des greniers," the insalubrious shelters ladies prefer to the trivial pleasures of high society. Finally, Perrault assures his readers that exemplary women will be discovered in the family room of humble dwellings where mothers and daughters accomplish their domestic tasks in serene anticipation of the head of household's return: "Entre dans les Reduits des honnestes familles . . . ."[50]

Albeit unwittingly, Perrault significantly juxtaposes hospitals, poorhouses, and family gathering rooms to the effect that domestic bliss participates by metonymy in the "air infecté" and the "retraites affreuses" of the unfortunate. In Perrault's rendering, the negative valence emanating from the claustrophobic world of suffering and poverty grazes the family hearth. Like the prisons and hospitals evoked by De Sales and Poullain,[51] Perrault's paternal house is suggestively placed to become a target of oppression. Already subservient to familial ideology, Perrault's women, who circulate among society's outcasts in prisons, hospitals, and ramshackle dwellings, articulate his own phantasm of the mastered body. Women's domestic confinement is magnified through reiteration as she is encircled by those subjugated through illness and poverty. The mobility of Perrault's good ladies is severely circumscribed. They appear to regress ever inward en route to the fixity that is women's lot in Fénelon's 1696 treatise, *De l'éducation des filles*.

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[49] The ambiguous nature of many of the texts on women's superiority has often been noted by critics including Timmermans and Agnenot. See, for example, Timmermans, 258-59.

[50] Perrault, *Apologie des femmes*, 6-7.

The most socially conservative elements of both feminist and antifeminist tracts on the nature of women come full circle in Fénelon's writings on the education of young girls. In consideration of their weak constitution and consequent inferior intelligence, women's learning should take into account their unfitness for public office and their gifts for the domestic arts:

> Leur corps, aussi bien que leur esprit est moins fort et moins robust que celui des hommes. En revanche, la nature leur a donné en partage l'industrie, la propreté et l'économie pour les occuper tranquillement dans leurs maisons. (92)

Fénelon's restrictive injunctions leave little doubt that he conceives of domestic servitude as capable of mastering female sensuality. "Qu'elles remarquent le moindre désordre dans la maison; tenir chaque chose en sa place," he enjoins. The interminable household task will silence the unruly body and ensure its chastity. "Pour son corps," he writes, "il est capital de lui en inspirer le mépris" (126). "Réprimez sévèrement toutes leurs fantaisies" (152); "Retenez leur esprit le plus que vous pourrez dans les bornes permises" (131); "renfermez-la dans les bornes de sa condition" (166). Cloistered behind the four walls of the family house, *le sexe*, women and the sexuality with which they were identified, is signaled out for repression.

Fénelon's ideology for revitalizing the aristocracy depended on the subjugation of women ever so much as the emerging bourgeois values which were to mark the following century. Immobilized by her "esprit d'exactitude" and by "la place qu'on donne à chaque chose" (156-57), his ideal woman is a mere puppet lacking both voice and movement. She must avoid at all cost the "agitation de corps immodeste pour une fille, les fréquentes sorties de la maison, et les conversations qui peuvent donner l'envie d'en sortir souvent" (112). Isolated from the society circles that so corrupted them by encouraging their penchant for pleasure, Fénelon's women, "n'ayant rien à craindre ni à inventer," are little more than domestic servants. When the archbishop contrasts his tranquil future housewife with "une personne dissimulée [qui] est toujours dans l'agitation" (147), he suggestively links dissimulation and invention. For as Richelet defined the term, "feindre" signifies equally "false appearance" and "poetic creation." According to Fénelon as well as Lescale, women are "natural" creatures unequipped for the artifice of creation. However, whereas Lescale's ideal Phyrné inspires men's invention through her beauty, Fénelon's exemplary young lady conserves the values created by her fatherland.

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[51] Poullain accentuates the unwholesome conditions of the era's hospitals where women accomplished charitable works. He notes that women perform their tasks without repugnance, despite the fact that their eyes are affronted by the most horrible of spectacles, their ears by insults and cries, their sense of smell by all the infections of the human body (40).

Clearly, Fénelon's vision of women, regressive in comparison with the values of elite society, recalls the earliest texts of the *Querelle des femmes*, which relied on Aristotle's identification of women with passive matter in contrast to men's active form. Fénelon's opposition to female mobility links him to Grenaille, La Rochefoucauld, and Boileau, all of whom expressed their resistance to social change by focusing on the errant woman. Grenaille's beautiful but monstrous courtesan is racing to her doom: "Ses pieds courent à la damnation" (261), he warns. La Rochefoucauld too condemns women's coquetry and further stipulates that the coquette—defined by Richelet as suffering from a lack of *attachement*—enjoys a forbidden liberty of movement.[52] One has only to read the description of Boileau's vilified mondaine in his acidly misogynist *Satire X* to understand that the focus on women's movement reflected the growing anxiety for a stable social order.

"LE SEXE"

"Le mary aime sa femme comme son propre corps," writes Courtin. The husband's relation to own sexuality, so neglected by the century's ideologies, is mediated through the body of his wife. In Courtin's view as in that of the majority of male theorists on women's nature, woman is the body to man's intellect which the former confirms and complements. Women, representing sexuality, are confined to the home where a spatiality of oppression, albeit not a perfect repression, is operative. While it cannot be denied that the body is circumscribed, paralyzed by its own muteness, and held back at arm's length, it is equally true that one never ceases to speak of it. In fact, the very injunction to silence merely serves to draw attention to it. For these reasons, the era's writings on women can be said to involve what Michel Foucault has defined as the "mise en discours du sexe," the proliferation of discourses on sexuality that date from the end of the sixteenth century and relate specifically to seventeenth-century confessional practices.[53] Throughout the era, men persistently sought to fathom the "true" nature of *le sexe*. And although sexuality was sublimated through domesticity in the interests of family lineage, the maternal body's aura of mystery, reinforced by aphonic chastity, promised an unspeakable secret.

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[52] La Rochefoucauld, *Oeuvres complètes*, 241; 277; 332; 334.

A closer look at this body of literature on women enables one to appreciate how much the seventeenth century contributed to conceptions of sexuality that have traditionally been attributed to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To illustrate this point, one can argue that the groundwork for the "hysterization of women's bodies," confined by Foucault to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was laid during the era of French Classicism. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, medicine incorporated the female body through an imaginary physiology that explained women's nature by referring equally to uterine theories and the theory of the temperaments. Le Moyne's *Gallerie des femmes fortes*, for one, attributes to their dominant cold and damp humors women's purported melancholy, lack of steadfastness, excessive emotionalism, and agile memory. Other women's champions including Lescale and the Capitaine Vigoureux praise the natural frigidity of women, which contributes to their inclination for chastity.

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[53] "Or un tout premier survol, fait de ce point de vue, semble indiquer que depuis la fin du XVIe siècle, la 'mise en discours' du sexe, loin de subir un processus de restriction, a au contraire été soumise à un mécanisme d'incitation croissante . . . ." *La Volonté de savoir*, 21. See also 47 for another formulation of the "mise en discours du sexe." Foucault contrasts the latter with the "repressive hypothesis," although he does not deny the reality of repression. See 18-30.

In the Age of Reason as in the nineteenth century, women's bodies were integrated into the politics of domesticity through the mother's hushed sensuality; the century's feminists and antifeminists alike identified women with their birthing role. Until the end of the eighteenth century, states Foucault, the codes governing sexuality centered on marriage. However, one might elaborate that the restrictions defining marriage in the seventeenth century were focused almost exclusively on women, who in theory assumed the onus of the era's mistrust of sexuality. Even though it would be reductive to equate the hypothetical seventeenth-century mother with her nineteenth-century counterpart, the "nervous woman," the foundations for this model were clearly set in classical theorists' spatial delineation of masculine and feminine. However, this textual corpus signifies far more than the obvious oppression of women. Many critics have stressed that the century's women were gaining prominence in spite of theoretical and legal attempts to repress them. "Women offer an outstanding example of the legalistic fallacy of absolutism," in Collins' words. "The social reality looked rather different" (156). Clearly, women's visible role in the salon and court cultures together with their increased participation in writing novels and fairy tales, attest that repression and expression are not mutually exclusive phenomena.[54] In theory, as Reiss has pointed out, women were excluded from culture. In practice, they were situated at its very center.

One cannot deny the oppressive dimension of the literature on women. Yet, one should equally stress the theoretical attempt to master the body that lies at the heart of these works. Women, as they are herein represented, are the locus of repressed sexuality. In an era that produced no significant ideology of the male body but a markedly restraining code of propriety —*bienséance*—sexual repression was valorized and founded in women's "chaste" nature.[55] Given the absence of theoretical reflection on sexuality and the restrictions imposed on its expression in the poetics of classicism as a whole, speculation on women's nature evasively situates sexuality in what is described as the alterity of the female body. Commenting on the otherness of the female evoked by male feminists, Angenot interprets these works as expressing men's desire for women. He describes a "gynocratic utopia" that aspires to liberate the restrictions placed on desire (171). However, in the final analysis, the real goal of these writings is to contain and suppress desire by transforming it into discursivity, which, contrary to desire, can be mastered.

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[54] On salon women, see Lougee. On women's increased participation in writing, see DeJean, *Tender Geographies* and ch. V of this study.

[55] Angenot has reached the same conclusion (127).

The mastered, chaste body theorized in these tracts is part of a larger cultural mosaic that directly relates to what has been defined as Cartesianism's "disenchantment with the body."[56] Although other works of the period such as Aulnoy's fairy tales invent an alternative to the male-defined model of repressed female sensuality—and sexuality in general—didactic speculation on women is clearly linked to Cartesian rationalism's mastery of the body and elision of sexuality. The chastised, mute body evoked in these tracts discloses the important role they play in emerging notions of modern subjectivity. Anne Deneys-Tunney describes how the Cartesian subject achieves self-awareness by defining the body as the other. Since the thinking subject defines himself in opposition to the body, the latter has heuristic value. And yet, it cannot exist in itself, but solely as an object perceived by a conscious subject,[57] an object such as Lescale's Phyrné before her discerning judges. The body mastered is the body enclosed, be it through the authoritative intellect of the *Discours de la Méthode* or the "patriarchal house" of the treatises on women.

In the Cartesian-inspired writings on women, the modern male theorist affirms his own existence (and that of his sex) by distancing himself from the alterity of the body, perceived as female.[58] Moreover, to counteract the disturbing intuition that the female body he defines as the other represents in actuality his own problematic relation to sexuality, the theorist isolates his woman in the family house and distances her through the constraints of propriety. Only under those circumstances can "le mary aime sa femme comme son propre corps," as Courtin so revealingly stated. Unfortunately, *bienséance* cannot exclude the sensuality it seeks to avoid. By writing its interdictions on the body, the code of propriety *forcefully* includes that very body in the social sphere.

Women's advocates and adversaries alike politicized their notions of female nature. Both essentialized women's procreative function, which either excluded them in theory from public roles or limited those roles to arbiters of literature, language, and social protocol. Perrault and Malebranche were among those theoreticians who stipulated ladies' natural gifts for judging affairs of literary taste.[59] According to Reiss, this innate ability is linked to what advocates unanimously described as women's nurturing and engendering roles.[60] In fact, women's social and procreative roles are interwoven in the writings of the period. By analogical reasoning, she who "contains" the human race likewise "contains" or polices literature, language, and sociability itself. As the grammarians Guez de Balzac and Claude Favre de Vaugelas insisted, women's instinctively sound judgments in linguistic matters make them appropriate guardians of the cultural patrimony; women's natural role as nurturing guardians uniquely equips them for the task of conserving those social values that preserve the cultural heritage. Clearly, the much cited "difference" between male and female reason was arrived at through the logic of analogy.

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[56] In his "Corps, Regard, Discours," Jean-Jacques Courtine refers to an "imaginaire classique du corps" which disengages the body from an ancient base of knowledge and beliefs. This leads to a "désenchantement du corps," in which the body, mastered by reason, is inhabited by a subject (112).

[57] *Ecritures du corps*, 48.

[58] Deneys-Tunney's expression for this ritual of distancing is eloquent: "une mise à distance de l'autre en moi" (44).

As Collins has argued, the century's male theorists defined women as a kind of "social police."[61] It is well known that salon women, who used their considerable influence to make or break an author's reputation, decided all questions involving the code of civility that regulated court and salon life. Once again, theorists relied on analogical thought to differentiate men's functions from those of *le sexe*: women's role as "social police" correlates closely with their preeminent attribute, chastity. The very "natural" restraint that enables them to control sexuality and thus promote the values of the newly emerging family-centered state, serves to enforce and interpret the established social code. Since women's gifts are the expression of their very nature, their relation to knowledge is instinctual and superior to acquired learning. According to women's apologists then, their excellence is the result and expression of their essence, which cannot be dissociated from their role in reproduction.

Angenot has noted that women's apologists stake their claims for female superiority on women's "natural advantages," related to attributes perceptible to the senses. This essentialist argument reasons that women's shortcomings are the result of culture, which has obscured their "true" exemplary nature. According to Angenot, the essentialist strains in feminist writings give evidence of an ahistoric "regression to origins" which becomes increasingly apparent as one approaches the eighteenth century and its naturalization of social roles.[62] Poullain himself sets out to discover what he calls "l'état naturel et véritable des choses."[63] He concludes that women's innate expressive eloquence, particularly as regards the passions, is not to be overshadowed by perceived flaws that are in reality culturally imposed.[64] Although the feminist attack on custom exemplified by Poullain operates by recognizing the effects of acculturation, it paradoxically relies on an ahistorical notion of female identity to prove women's "natural" superiority.

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[59] According to the philosopher Malebranche, who theorized the difference between men's and women's reason, "Whatever is a matter of taste . . . is their province." (Quoted in Reiss, 214). Perrault refers to women's function as arbiters of taste in his *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes*, 1:30-31; 37-38.

[60] Reiss, 215.

[61] Collins, 127.

If modernist apologies of women are motivated by the desire to disclose women's true, essential nature, they can be said to harbor a regressive strain. Indeed, the "breakdown of rationalist epistemology" that Lougee identifies with these texts that gave new value to women's non-rational, intuitive forms of knowing,[65] is indissociable from the essentialist view of women; by their very nature, women are privy to an innate form of knowledge which cannot be acquired. Women's separate reason, grounded as it was in a "regression to origins" inseparable from women's identification with the body, foreshadows not only *sensibilité* and romanticism,[66] but perhaps as well the greater social oppression of women in the following two centuries. For seventeenth and eighteenth-century theorists alike, women's social role is a consequence of her very nature.

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[62] See Marc Angenot, 163-69. According to Angenot, from the middle of the eighteenth century, the principle of equality between men and women enunciated by Poullain is opposed to the sexist thesis of the complementary difference between the sexes. The latter posits in theory women's equality in order to deny it (169).

[63] Poullain, 7.

[64] Poullain argues for women's natural eloquence of manner and expression in work cited, 30; 33-34; 65; 84. On 96-97, he reasons that one often attributes to women's nature what is purely the result of acculturation. Women are especially gifted in expressing sentiment: "Se peut-il rien de plus fort et de plus éloquent que les lettres de plusieurs Dames, sur tous les sujets qui entrent dans le commerce ordinairement, et principalement sur les passions, dont le ressort fait toute la beauté et tout le secret de l'éloquence. Elles les touchent d'une manière si délicate, et les expriment si naïvement, qu'on est obligé d'avoüer qu'on ne les sent pas autrement, et que toutes les Rhétoriques du monde ne peuvent donner aux hommes ce qui ne coûte rien aux femmes" (34).

[65] Lougee, 31-32.

[66] Lougee associates the "breakdown in rationalist epistemology" as evidenced in the tracts on the nature of women with *sensibilité* and romanticism (31).

In conclusion then, two conflicting ideologies inform seventeenth-century writings on the nature of women. On the one hand, the Cartesian elision of sexuality which is synonymous with repressed female sexuality, and on the other, an emerging counter-epistemology that valorizes non-rational knowledge as a tributary of female essence. Both ideological strains rely on women's putative nature to elaborate key tenets of their respective theories. When ancients and moderns[67], antifeminists and feminists, speculated on women's nature, they created *le sexe*, a rhetorical invention inspired by the chaste female body. However, non-didactic literature including novels and fairy tales by both men and especially women, bears witness that the image of the hearth-loving wife and mother was merely one of several portraits bequeathed us by French Classicism.

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[67] On the subject of prejudice, Poullain discerns no difference between ancients and moderns: "Mais la pluspart des Anciens et des Modernes n'ayant basty leur Philosophie que sur des préjugez populaires, et ayant esté dans une grande ignorance d'eux-mêmes; ce n'est pas merveille qu'ils ayent si mal connu les autres. Sans nous mettre en peine des Anciens, on peut dire des Modernes, que la manière dont on les enseigne, leur faisant croire quoy que faussement, qu'ils ne peuvent devenir plus habiles que ceux qui les ont précedez, les rend esclaves de l'Antiquité, et les porte à embrasser aveuglément tout ce qu'ils y trouvent, comme des veritez constantes" (106-07). Although Poullain here stresses the persistence of custom from ancient times to the present, it is well known that, in the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, even the moderns such as Perrault clung tenaciously to certain of the time-worn commonplaces on women.

Chapter Two

Corps cadavres: Heroes and Heroines in the Tales of Perrault

"GRISELIDIS"

Before he published the 1697 collection *Contes du temps passé avec des moralités*, Charles Perrault depicted the ideal wife in the verse tale "Griselidis" which he recited to his colleagues at the Académie française in 1691.[1] Since, as Gilbert Rouger has pointed out, "Griselidis" participates in the debate on women's virtue or lack thereof,[2] it can be considered an avatar of those texts centered around the *Querelle des femmes* and examined in the last chapter. "Griselidis" was conceived and presented to illustrate the moral art associated with the cause of the moderns championed by Perrault.[3] Yet, as Perrault's dedication to "Mademoiselle" avows, modern Parisians like herself will find it difficult if not impossible to identify with the sublime patience of the persecuted heroine: "Je ne me suis jamais flatté," admits Perrault, "Que par vous de tout point il [Griselidis' example] serait imité" (57). Instead, the subjugated female sensuality embodied by the heroine will evolve into a subdued and perhaps more "modern" version as the serene housewife of Perrrault's later *Apologie des femmes.* After all, admits the academician, Parisian society would merely ridicule the "trop antiques leçons" of this modern fairy tale. Indeed, this tension between ancient and modern, tradition and innovation, subjugated and dominant, hierarchy and its reversal, runs like a subversive thread through Perrault's tales, both in verse and in prose.

Griselidis' docility, and especially her modesty—"un air chaste et modeste / Charmait uniquement et plus que tout le reste" (68)—compel the smitten prince to risk a misalliance, defined and decried by the century as a marriage between social unequals. As we shall see, this initial mismarriage appears to proliferate into a recurrent and problematic figure in five of Perrault's seven subsequently published prose tales. After straying from his hunting companions, the hero serendipitously discovers the humble shepherdess, who spins as she tends her sheep. Huntsman-like aggressivity and dominance prefigure the prince's authoritative role in the couple's eventual marriage, at which time the warrior enters the house and is transformed into a tyrannical mate. However, for the moment, the hunter-prince's perspective focuses on a lovely peasant girl who, "D'une main sage et ménagère / Tournait son agile fuseau" (64). This spindle, which makes an ominous reappearance in the "Belle au bois dormant," defines the parameters of Griselidis' submission and ensures her confinement to a traditionally "feminine" role. More important, the prince's initial gaze provokes the requisite modesty of this beauty who "S'était toujours sauvée à l'ombre des bocages" (64). Clearly, the invasive hero's vision foreshadows the heroine's loss of innocence: "Dès qu'elle se vit aperçue / D'un brillant incarnat la prompte et vive ardeur / De son beau teint redoubla la splendeur, / Et sur son visage épandue, / Y fit triompher la pudeur" (65). Griselidis' "brillant incarnat," synonymous with the "*vermillon de la vertu*" defining *pudeur* in the *Dictionnaire universel*,[4] is a guarantee that female sensuality, once encoded by a male perspective grounded in theories on women's nature, will be relegated to the conjugal house.

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes refer to Jean-Pierre Collinet's edition of the *Contes.*

[2] *Contes*, Ed. Gilbert Rouger, 13.

[3] See Mark Soriano, *Les Contes de Perrault*, 314.

Perrault's tale appears to subscribe to that view of human sexuality offered by the literature on women: identified with and confined to the female body, sexuality is circumvented through the codes of propriety entrusted to women. Griselidis, who recalls the veiled Roman goddess Pudicité described in Furetière's dictionary,[5] at once dissimulates her own and the prince's desire "Sous le voile innocent de cette aimable honte," which reiterates her refuge "à l'ombre des bocages." The heroine's blushing together with the amorous hero's gaze, contrasts with the somber "shadows" and "veil" in an eloquent rendering of repression. Chastity, the unique province of women, subdues the expression of passion, "l'autre en moi," in order that it be channeled into a conjugal society presided over by a male mind. The body and by extension sexuality, women's symbolic double, is subdued and mastered through the prism of a rational consciousness. Such optical appropriation of the female body is pervasive in Perrault's tales, including "Peau d'Ane," which features another hero-prince who first spies his beloved through a keyhole, then loses his heart to her "sage et modeste pudeur" (108). According to Philip Lewis, Cartesian rationalism, which provides the conceptual foundation for the century's privileging of the visual, legitimates the value system articulated in Perrault's writings.[6]

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[4] Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel,* 1727.

[5] *Pudicité* is in part defined as: "Divinité adorée par les Romains sous la forme d'une femme voilée & dans une contenance très modeste."

Griselidis agrees with her future husband's assertion that "On ne peut jamais vivre heureux / Quand on y commande tous deux" (62). Nonetheless, Griselidis' "bonne honte," as Richelet calls *pudeur,* merely serves to encourage her husband's erratic behavior. One might even say that her virtue incites the prince's Sadean impulses. Although the narrator ascribes the hero's deviant character traits to melancholy, defined as an illness according to seventeenth-century medicine, his unconventional flouting of the marriage contract together with his sadistic persecution of the unbearably saintly heroine, suggest a rebellious nature impatient with tradition. From the outset, Perrault's characters, first the heroes, then the heroines, display a willingness to tempt the strictures of conventional hierarchies. The royal hero's "maligne humeur" is a severe character flaw which provokes his unflinching mistreatment of Griselidis, and at the same time anticipates the ineffectual husbands and fathers who dominate the later prose tales. Perrault is generally unforgiving in his depiction of father figures, who, excepting the present case, seem far removed from the "little kings in the home" that abound in didactic writings.[7]

Ideologically speaking, the Perraldian disdain for the patriarch informs his modernist stance in the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns: he challenges the "fathers" of culture, the ancients with whom he identified his intellectual rival Boileau. Indeed, the misogynist frame that defines the melancholic hero's perception of *le sexe* is nearly identical to the scathing antifeminism expressed in Boileau's 1694 *Satire X.* By attributing the hero's mistrust of women to his unstable temperament, Perrault implies that the ancient perspective on women initiated by Aristotle is flawed in quite the same way that the body is weakened by illness. The "capricious" prince of "Griselidis" profits from his new-found husbandly authority to put his wife's patience and fidelity to the test. Clearly, he uses marriage as a subterfuge in order to engage in a variety of abuses of spousal power. Experimenting with the hierarchical conjugal figure traced by the era's tracts on women, the adventuresome prince endangers without dismissing the ordained familial relations of subordination and dominance. When the deceitful hero repudiates the long-suffering Griselidis and perversely introduces their own daughter as his future bride, his obstinate cruelty is nothing short of subversive. It at once suggests the theme of incest underlying the 1694 verse tale "Peau d'Ane," and foreshadows the simultaneously threatened and reinforced family hierarchies in the *Contes du temps passé.*

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[6] See Lewis' *Seeing Through the Mother Goose Tales: Visual Turns in the Writings of Charles Perrault*, ch. I, 10-41. This chapter studies Perrault's *Parallèle* and reveals its reliance on the Cartesian tradition of rationalism.

[7] In "Louis Marin Lecteur de Charles Perrault," Catherine Velay-Vallantin interprets the donkey skin worn by the heroine of "Peau d'Ane" as "un meurtre symbolique du père-roi, désargenté et dépossédé sans son animal surnaturel" (274).

Since, at this time, the patriarchal family was being strengthened and the metaphors of family and marriage were widely used to describe the state,[8] there is a seditious ring to the tampering with conjugal bliss found in "Griselidis." Addressing the tale's intimate relation to the symbolics of power, Michèle Longino has shown how both the paratext—Preface, dedication and closing epistle—and the tale itself can be read as "an incitement to question authority," whether that of abusive hero or absolutist king. According to Longino, "Griselidis," a study in relations of power and authority, is a potentially subversive political statement that does not, for all that, abandon its ambivalent tone.[9]

The unstable notion of marital power relations suggested by the prince's restless experimenting with the traditional ideals of male dominance and female subservience, is transposed to the prose tales. In many of the latter, the family can be likened to a battleground where power struggles are delineated along the fault lines of gender: opportunistic stepmothers defy cowardly noblemen, ogresses endanger the royal lineage, disobedient wives challenge the master's word. The modernist world of the *Contes* is plagued by mismatched couples and shifting conjugal hierarchies. Gender-specific in the tracts on women, but paradoxically exceeded in "Griselidis," the foundations of household authority are now undermined and the state is consequently unsteady. When one examines the successors of the idealized Griselidis—"D'une obéissance achevée . . . Et qui n'ait point de volonté"—it becomes clear that their protean nature, reinforced by the narrator's pervasive irony, merely serves to accentuate the question of women's—and by extension the body's—place in what is not always the master's house.

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[8] According to Sarah Hanley's "Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France," the metaphors of family and marriage used to describe the state outlasted those of divine right (27).

[9] See Michèle Farrell, "*Griselidis*: Issues of Gender, Genre and Authority." Farrell's reading of the paratext reveals the bi-dimensional aspect of the tale, which participates in both the *conte* and the *nouvelle*. As a *conte* (the dedication to "Mademoiselle"), it furnishes didactic lessons for a female readership, whereas its *nouvelle* (the letter to "Monsieur") dimension invites the reader to reflect on questions of authority. This generic intersection along with the two implied audiences, characterizes the entire collection and accounts for the undecidable tone of the tales. As Farrell points out, Perrault's version of this folktale differs from that of others such as Boccacio's rendition, in that Perrault's prince severs the marriage contract.

Louis Marin's analyses of Perrault's tales were perhaps the first to focus on the important theme of power that traverses the *Contes*. See Marin's *Food for Thought*.

"LA BELLE AU BOIS DORMANT"

A case in point is "La Belle au Bois dormant," the first tale included in the *Contes du temps passé.* The tale's characteristic undecidability results from a comic opposition between a complacently impassive princess heroine and her aggressively voracious mother-in-law. On the one hand, female sensuality is ordered through the perspective of a rational consciousness, whereas on the other, it defies all constraint in order to indulge its unavowable appetites. The spindle that first appeared in *Griselidis* resurfaces as the spinning wheel which, once again, circumscribes women's sphere of action. Forcibly symbolizing women's work, the spinning wheel puts an end to the heroine's wanderings as she circulates about the palace, too far from her assigned place: "c'est principalement aux hommes qu'il appartient de se promener," warns Grenaille. The princess, "fort vive, un peu étourdie," resembles Fénelon's hypothetical young girl, whose unseemly curiosity and "vivacité d'imagination" must be restrained at all costs. For Perrault as for Fénelon, domesticity, here symbolized by the prick of the spinning-wheel, serves to suppress female unruliness. At the same time, this first hint of bloodshed foretells the carnage that will afflict the noble heroines of "La Barbe bleue" and "Le Petit Poucet."

The needle draws blood, causing the princess to evanesce into a hundred-years' sleep, an eloquent metaphor for the feminine passivity and contained sensuality so vaunted by theorists who extolled women's chastity. Frozen in time but not lifeless, the heroine's subdued body represents those disruptive impulses to be distanced from the newly assertive rational consciousness. The unconscious body overtaken by endless sleep is ceremonially sealed within a palace by "une si grande quantité de grands arbres et de petits, de ronces d'épines entrelacées les unes dans les autres que bête ni homme n'y aurait pu passer" (134). Sexual repression is poeticized by such ritualized enclosure that is yet another rendition of "the laws of God and those of the world," which according to the theorist Le Moyne, encircle and imprison women.[10] The societal dicta evoked by Le Moyne seem to be outlined in the interlaced trees and bushes surrounding the princess, since the palace they protect will soon shelter yet another familial "little state," consisting of the royal couple along with their children Aurore and Jour. Albeit with disarming irony that counters the mysteries of reproduction so prevalent in theories of women's nature, Perrault's closing *moralités* do allude to women's prescribed role by using the terms "*le sexe*" and "*femelle*" to designate them. When the beautiful princess at last awakens to behold the prince's gaze, she is transformed into "le plus bel spectacle qu'il eût jamais vu" (135). After all, as the feminist Grenaille concedes, "elle est . . . toujours morte, tant qu'elle n'a point au dedans de soy de principe, qui se mouvant luy communique sa vie, & les facultez d'agir."[11]

Symbol of sensuality, the heroine comes into existence only insofar as she is fashioned through the prism of the hero's rational perspective. The relation between the viewing subject and the perceived object has affinities with Cartesianism, and reminds one of Heidegger's description of Descartes' metaphysics as involving a scrutinizing subject who transforms the world into a picture.[12] While the Cartesian frame involves a scientific mind in search of truth and knowledge, Perrault's fictional transposition features a hunter in quest of ideal feminine beauty. In this fairy tale as in "Griselidis," royal hunters "discover" their unsuspecting prey while exploring the confines of their domains in search of adventure. Again, both heroes focus their perspectives on docile beauties who are consequently transformed into "spectacle," enchanting pictures for pleasurable viewing. Living portraits of the passivity enshrined by writings on women's nature, these submissive heroines exemplify the ideal of female chastity. In fact, the heroine of "La Belle au bois dormant" surpasses that ideal in the second part of the tale often expurgated from versions for children.

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[10] *La Gallerie des femmes fortes*, 149. See also ch. I.

[11] *L'Honneste Mariage*, 322.

[12] See Lewis, 16-17. Lewis cites Heidegger's "The Age of the World Picture," in which the philosopher relates Descartes' metaphysics to modern science. In Heidegger's view, Cartesian truth is situated in the subject, for whom the world is an object to be examined.

Since "Sleeping Beauty" as originally written by Perrault includes two versions of *le sexe*, one inspired by and concordant with his century's theories on the nature of women, the other shaped by the Gallic tradition of folkloric misogyny, this tale and others like it represent female sensuality as simultaneously mastered and asserted. The breach in the sanctified hierarchy illustrated by the prince's act of envisioning, then animating the paralyzed heroine, coincides with the tale's inscription of the contemporary practice of *mésalliance*. Decried by all manner of elites, from the ancient nobility of the sword to the newly ennobled, intermarriages between persons of unequal social status was not, for all that, unique to the seventeenth century. On the contrary, misalliance was prevalent since the Middle Ages. However, the perception of this accepted practice underwent significant changes in the course of time, changes that relate in part to the identity crisis suffered by the nobility as a result of the social and economic changes that characterized the nascent state.[13] Historians stress the complexity of the issue of misalliance, yet all concur that, for many of Perrault's contemporaries, intermarriages symbolized disorder and instability at its worst. Nonetheless, even if alliances involving parvenus and ancient nobility were met with official contempt, intermarriage was frequent, especially between the ancient nobility and the legally noble.[14]

Clearly, certain forms of intermarriage elicited more public outcry than others. Such were the marriages involving financiers, arguably "the most controversial social grouping in seventeenth-century France."[15] There is every reason to believe that the mother of "Sleeping Beauty"'s hero-prince might very well have been the daughter of a financier. The first in a succession of domineering matriarchs, Sleeping Beauty's stepmother was sought out by the prince's deceased father because of her fabulous wealth, "à cause de ses grands biens" (137). A misalliance is indicated, the catalyst that disrupts conventional household protocol in so many tales of the Perraldian corpus. Perrault's mismatches, signifying as they most often do that women have usurped what the century considered to be the province of men's authority, exemplify what Davis first identified as "woman on top," the engravings and other images of sexual inversion that were pervasive in preindustrial Europe. According to Davis, these imagined reversals express the conflicts that ensued when emerging redistributions of power challenged traditional forms of order.[16]

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[13] See Gayle K. Brunelle, "Dangerous Liaisons: *Mésalliance* and Early Modern French Noblewomen, " 81-83; 100.

[14] See Collins, *The State in Early Modern France*, 132, and Brunelle, 99.

[15] Lougee, *Le Paradis des femmes*, 134.

Certain of Perrault's contemporaries including the Sieur de Mainville, would have exonerated the deceased father of the prince for having married below his station in order to secure his financial interests: "Il n'a proprement que les femmes qui se mesallient," asserted Mainville.[17] For while Boileau would likely have protested that the departed king had "By a cowardly contract sold all his ancestors,"[18] rare were those who shunned a financially promising match with the daughter of a wealthy financier.[19] Considering that the husband's rank determined the status of the children, *mésalliance* had less overt consequences for male as opposed to female nobility.[20] However, money was widely seen as a threat to social cohesion, a disruptive force that signaled a breach in social stratification.[21] Given that early modern Europe unanimously considered the female sex to be the disorderly one,[22] what better figure than the daughter of a financier, doubly unruly by sex and by heritage, to infringe upon household decorum? Surely, "Sleeping Beauty"'s ogress-queen mother embodies the destructive appetites that accompanied rapid social change and threatened the established order.

Upon the death of his father, the prince officially marries Sleeping Beauty, who takes up residence with him at the royal court. There is no hint of trouble until the newly-anointed king departs for war. During her son's absence, the ogress will reign over the kingdom while simultaneously unleashing her monstrous appetite. To satisfy her cravings, she promptly orders that the heroine and her children be slaughtered and served for dinner. Violent death is avoided thanks to a wily and compassionate servant, yet not before the heroine, possessed of the same morbid passivity that afflicted Griselidis, offers herself to her would-be assassin: "Faites votre devoir, lui dit-elle en lui tendant le col" (139). Although Sleeping Beauty's disabling complacency is diametrically opposed to her mother-in-law's aggressive bestiality, both characters are associated with the body, whether created by contemporary theorists or philosophers of antiquity. Nevertheless, solely the ogress-queen assumes the functions of the male sovereign. That the queen is so grotesquely equated with the body and its unspeakable desires serves to underscore the dangers incurred when sensuality assumes control and asserts itself as dominant rather than dominated.

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[16] Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 150.

[17] *Du bonheur et du malheur du mariage et des considérations qu'il faut faire avant que de s'y engager*, 132-33.

[18] Boileau, "Satire V," "De l'Abus," quoted by Lougee, 104.

[19] See Collins, 132.

[20] See Brunelle, 99.

[21] See Lougee, 72-77. Lougee explains that the salon was associated with money, which was in turn viewed as unsettling the social order. Contemporaries represented the salon as a crossroads of social mobility, in which money, venality, and luxury were rampant. Because the salons were directed by women, women too were associated with the disorder thought to result from the convergent influences of wealth and venality.

[22] Davis, 124.

Perhaps the ogress inherited certain of her voracious female instincts from her father, who may have resembled the infamous seventeenth-century financier Claude Cornuel. Castigated by his peers as the "king of the harpies," Cornuel was publicly scorned because he was thought to have enriched himself and his relatives by bankrupting others. The financier was described as a veritable ogre in "La Voix du Peuple au Roy," which protested Richelieu's policies while condemning Cornuel as "more criminal than all the men who have *devoured* the people (emphasis added)." Like the women invented by the misogynist Boileau, Cornuel was identified with disruptive appetites and unbridled passions: he lavished riches on his mistress, ruined or saved men according to the dictates of his passion.[23]

As Louis Marin has pointed out, ogres are a metaphor for bestiality that expresses itself in culture as deviance.[24] While it is true that the ogress-regent eventually meets her doom by plunging headlong into a cauldron of toads and snakes, the chaos and violence endemic to the sensual female haunt Perrault's fairy tales. As a result, the generally conservative values extolled by the *Contes* are contradicted by suggestive alternatives to existing family structures. Davis has in fact argued that, although most anthropologists interpret comic inversion as ultimately reinforcing stable hierarchy, gender role reversal may also prompt innovation.[25]

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[23] Quoted by Lougee, 160. From "Sur la Mort de Cornuel," Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Conrart MS 5131, p. 198. The entire reference reads as follows: "[Cornuel] ruins and saves whom he pleases according to the movements of his hatred, his love, his interests; who buys houses and builds palaces for his trollop, on whom he spends more than fifty thousand livres annually . . . this pox should be punished with a double torment for having led a rollicking life . . . ."

[24] "Robert Sauce ('Sleeping Beauty in the Forest')," in *Food for Thought*, 144. Marin defines the ogre in fiction as "a kind of living metaphor for a wild and ferocious bestiality that has been deviated into culture and society."

"LA BARBE BLEUE"

The blood shed by the prick of the spinning-wheel needle and suggested in the image of the young Sleeping Beauty, offering her outstretched neck to her executioner, reappears, virulent and degraded, in the third tale of the collection, "La Barbe bleue." Misalliance, contamination of the bloodlines, is here the agent of terrifying carnage. "On s'indigne beaucoup plus contre une femme, que contre un homme qui se mesallie," warns Furetière. The century's professed loathing of marriages of mixed rank fell disproportionately upon women, perhaps because noblewomen who married commoners forfeited the right to noble status for their offspring.[26] Moreover, marrying beneath one's status implies an act of passion, which, according to theorists on women's nature, was best repressed. Decidedly, passion is not the impetus behind this heroine's attraction to her betrothed. Rather, the prosperous Bluebeard, whose possessions include "de belles maisons à la Ville et à la Campagne, de la vaisselle d'or et d'argent, des meubles en broderie, et des carrosses tout dorés" (150), offers luxury in abundance to this daughter of a "femme de qualité."[27]

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[25] See Davis, 129-31; 143-44. Davis argues that "the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place" (131). Literary examples of inversion "kept open alternate ways of conceiving family structure" (143). To illustrate how "the unruly option" can embolden one to action, Davis cites the example of Antoinette de Bourgignon, who took the first step toward her future career by disguising herself as a hermit and fleeing an arranged marriage (144).

[26] Brunelle states that "From the male point of view, focused as it was on preserving the nobility of the parental lineage, derogation in the female line mattered little" (83). This was perhaps true in practice, however, one cannot deny the indignation expressed by theorists and other male writers against the noblewomen who contracted marriages with social unequals. According to these theorists, women's misalliances were more blameworthy than those of men.

[27] According to Furetière's dictionary, "Quand on dit absolument, un homme de *qualité*, c'est un homme qui tient un des premiers rangs dans l'Etat, soit par sa noblesse, soit par ses emplois, ou ses dignités."

Mainville explains how this financier was able to attract noble wives[28]: "Le Brocart ouvre les oreilles de l'une; la petite Calle qui suit ou qui porte la queue persuade l'autre; les Perles adoucissent la plus fière; & le Carrosse enlève la plus difficile."[29] It was not uncommon for fathers and brothers to seek intermarriage of their daughters and sisters to commoners, in order to secure the financial interests of the family. In some cases, sacrificing a noble daughter, particularly a younger one such as the heroine, was the only alternative to maintaining the lineage.[30] Perhaps encouraged by her family, "Bluebeard"'s heroine, seduced by the hero's splendid possessions and gallant sociability, finally concedes that he is a "fort honnête homme," despite his horrid beard. Reiterated inventories of the evil hero's magnificent riches assert his power while entrapping the noble heroine, who appears oblivious to her villainous husband's dubious history and family lineage. Dazzled, she pays ever less attention to the unnatural color of the villain's beard, the blue chosen to designate both the kings of France and the royal system of justice.[31] Instead, Bluebeard's sumptuous dwelling entrances her into "forgetting" that her mate's several previous wives have mysteriously disappeared, one by one. Like the nobility described by Boileau, the heroine and her family seem to ally themselves with the infamous while substituting money for virtue. "For, if the glitter of gold does not enhance the blood, In vain does one make the splendor of his rank shine," warns Boileau.[32] Yet, Bluebeard's ostentatious urban and country estates blur the distinctions of rank, while convincing the heroine to expose herself to the uncertainties of a misalliance.

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[28] Jean-Pierre Collinet points out in his *Notices* to the *Contes du temps passé* that Gilles de Rais was perhaps not the model for "Barbe bleue." Collinet too believes that Bluebeard's sumptuous dwelling signals his profession as a financier. "Le mariage du début ressemble à ces alliances monstrueuses qu'une aristocratie désargnetée conclut avec des roturiers enrichis (284)." Others who have speculated on Bluebeard's identity as a financier include Jacques Barchilon, Catherine Velay-Vallantin, and Jean-Marie Apostolidès.

[29] Mainville, 132-33.

[30] See Brunelle, 98-9.

[31] In "Des Choses cachées dans le château de Barbe Bleue" (187), Apostolidès notes that the color blue, normally associated with the noble virtues of loyalty and obedience, connotes infamy when associated with the villainous commoner. His strange beard sets the villain apart from the rest of the community, yet Bluebeard refuses to rid himself of it, perhaps because it conceals a diabolical mark. It is known that inquisitors of the century's witch hunts ordered their suspects to be shaven in order to reveal any diabolical marks concealed beneath the hair.

[32] "Satire V," quoted in Lougee, 104.

When her new husband departs on a business trip, the young wife receives her women friends, who tour this magnificent abode worthy of Louis' finance minister Fouquet. A variation on the salon gathering, the art of conversation practiced by the admiring ladies in Bluebeard's mansion is inspired by a glittering display of riches. If one assumes that Bluebeard is a financier, this scene, which situates a salon reunion in his palatial residence, bespeaks the intimate relation between *salonnières* and financiers as set forth by Carolyn Lougee. For many of Perrault's contemporaries, the salon was a crossroads where the forces transforming seventeenth-century France converged. Salons were associated with social mobility and the accompanying effects wrought by luxury, venality or the selling of offices, and money. Financiers often patronized salons whose members included significant numbers of their wives and daughters.[33] Bluebeard's wife invites her friends to tour the house, including the *garde meubles*, encumbered with such collected treasures as "des tapisseries, des lits, des sofas, des cabinets, des guéridons, des tables et des miroirs, où l'on se voyait depuis les pieds jusqu'à la tête . . . " (150). These same mirrors, one of the era's luxury items, reappear in "Cendrillon," where they are associated with opportunistic arrivistes who lack the most basic rudiments of acceptable behavior. Bluebeard's valued possessions can reflect the art market newly organized under Louis XIV; merchants opened boutiques and tempted wealthy consumers with priceless objects. Bluebeard merely emulates the king, the first collector of the kingdom.[34]

While the ladies feast their eyes on Bluebeard's prized collection, their noble hostess scurries precipitously to the room below, the only one whose entry was strictly forbidden by her husband. She dashes to the forbidden chamber with such abandon that she nearly breaks her neck: "elle pensa se rompre le cou deux ou trois fois" (151). Recalling the image of Sleeping Beauty's extended neck awaiting the executioner's knife, the heroine's endangered body presages the scene of the corpses whose throats have been slashed as well as her own subsequent brush with the same gruesome death. The newlywed, conscious of her husband's interdiction, pauses on the threshold of the forbidden chamber: "songeant à la défense que son Mari lui avait faite, et considérant qu'il pourrait lui arriver malheur d'avoir été désobéissante . . ." (151). Deliberately transgressing Poullain's notion of "reasonable" family hierarchy, the heroine unlocks the door and becomes simultaneously the point of perspective and the usurper of forbidden knowledge:

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[33] See note 10 above, and Lougee, 134; 161. According to Somaize's list in the *Dictionnaire des précieuses*, numerous salon women were wedded to financiers.

[34] See Apostolidès, *Le Roi machine, 123.*

> après quelques moments elle commença à voir que le plancher était couvert de sang caillé, et que dans ce sang se miraient les corps de plusieurs femmes mortes attachées le long des murs (c'était toutes les femmes que la Barbe bleue avait epousées, et qu'il avait egorgées l'une après l'autre). (151)

In juxtaposition with the preceding description of the *garde-meubles*, the heroine's vision suggests that these dead women, so many collectors' trophies, are barely distinguishable from the precious objects located directly above them. Richelet indeed defines the *cabinet* which conceals this horrible secret as a room containing valuable art works, "les tableaux de prix." The interchangeability of the victims, murdered in orderly succession—"l'une après l'autre"—suggests their fate as the prey of a serial killer.[35] Perhaps these unfortunate women consulted a marriage list such as the one published in Furetière's *Roman bourgeois*, which ranked eligible marriage partners according to their wealth.[36] If such were the case, they entered unwisely into an economic transaction in which their noble blood was exchanged for Bluebeard's enhanced social status. Clearly, putting financial solvency before the interests of the bloodline unleashes lethal instincts.

Upon entering the prohibited room, the heroine is confronted with a sinister vision which eerily evokes Grenaille's "Il faut qu'elles s'attachent à une maison," as well as Le Moyne's "les liens de la bien-séance l'attachent au logis."[37] This grotesque scene visually renders the ultimate sacrifice required by the "little state." It also serves to underscore that, excepting the three animals devoured by the ogress of "La Belle au bois dormant," the sheep consumed by the ogre of "Le Petit Poucet," and Bluebeard himself, the victims of Perrault's fairy tales are women, most of noble blood. If one assumes the noble origin of Bluebeard's slain wives, this bloodshed bespeaks the loss of certain legal and economic powers suffered by the era's women of rank.[38] Gone, in one powerful image, the immense cultural influence, to say nothing of the sexual liberty, enjoyed by women of the seventeenth-century urban elite. Nowhere, perhaps, has the violence inherent in domesticity been more forcefully rendered than in this depiction of slain wives literally hanging from the walls of the conjugal house. This macabre vision corrects inappropriate female curiosity and disobedience by hyperbolizing in a morbid register, women's confinement to domesticity promoted by theorists and moralists alike.

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[35] In *From the Beast to the Blonde*, Marina Warner relates that one of the main causes of women's deaths before the nineteenth century was childbirth. According to Warner, the scene of the bloody crypt represents the situation in which widowers remarried in quick succession upon the not uncommon death of their wives in labor. Warner interprets Bluebeard's several marriages as a form of "serial murder" (263).

[36] See Erica Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France*, 122.

[37] François de Grenaille, *L'Honneste Veuve*, 22; Pierre Le Moyne, *La Gallerie des femmes fortes*, 268. See also ch. I.

Clearly, Bluebeard's spouse cannot infringe on sanctified marital hierarchy without impunity; rather, her challenge to the villain's power, the latter synonymous with the secret knowledge locked in the chamber, threatens to exact the price of blood. Lewis has argued that Bluebeard's authority rests on this dreadful secret, equivalent to the knowledge that his wife strives to possess and that he endeavors to keep from her. The bloody crypt celebrates "an abject relation of subjugation" in which power is based on sexual difference, a difference essential to Bluebeard's brute dominance. At all costs, the hideous financier must maintain his identity by asserting his exclusive right to knowledge, a secret he himself has created, a fantasy sustained by female blood.[39] One can follow the trail of blood from Griselidis' blushing modesty, to the curious Sleeping Beauty's wounded finger, and, after bypassing the present heroine's failed beheading, to the disobedient wives' caked blood.

The ghastly vision of mutilated corpses also signals the demise of the symbolism of blood which was linked with the nobility: the loss of noble blood accompanied by its transformation into "sang caillé," reflects the weakening currency of the aristocratic ideology of lineage, in conflict with the emerging power of the monetary. The identity of the nobility had traditionally been defined through a "symbolics of blood." Noble selfhood was confirmed through ancestry and its corresponding system of alliances.[40] In the stable society of orders, blue blood and power were indissociable. However, since the very meaning of the term "nobility" was in flux during the seventeenth century,[41] images of corrupted blood abound: "si tous les grands Seigneurs préféroient les amourettes aux véritables amours, l'illustre Sang seroit bien-tost *tary*, les grandes Familles seroient bien-tost éteintes, & les Estats seroient bien-tost affaiblis" (emphasis added).[42] Caked blood is synonymous with tainted blood, whether it stems from sexual peccadilloes or intermarriages between persons of unequal status. The suspended cadavers surrounded by a mirror of dried blood signify that the nobility, suffering from the moral bankruptcy decried by Boileau, is "in the red." The ancestral houses of the old aristocracy are symbolically demolished as the feudal ethos competes with that of the market place.

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[38] See Joan Kelly, *Women, History and Theory*, 67.

[39] Lewis, 208-37. Lewis' valuable analysis of the power relation between Bluebeard and his wife should be read in its entirety. Drawing upon Luce Irigary, he interprets the blood on the key as the "darkly figurative and positive blood-value of womanhood, of matriarchy or maternal power" (235).

Purged of noble blood, the body that sustained the system of alliances through its progeny is reduced to a lifeless object, a monument to past glory. Female sensuality is reified, frozen motionless in the reflection of dried blood, poised to enter into an economic transaction. Perrault relies on the identification of women with the body already posited in the tracts on women's nature. However, he goes one step further when he imposes a mathematical perspective on female nature. Strung along the chamber walls one after another, "l'une après l'autre," the slaughtered wives have been subjected to a quantifying operation not foreign to the calculating Bluebeard, who counts on his wives' disobedience: he relies on their perception of the bloody chamber in order to confirm his power. Once confronted by the necrophilic husband, their terrified eyes reflect Bluebeard's brutal superiority over all members of their sex, "one after another." Bluebeard's career is devoted to self-affirmation; he fatally reiterates his identity as "le maistre & comme le propriétaire de la personne de sa femme . . . il en devient le possesseur, le maître et le seigneur."[43]

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[40] Michel Foucault, "La Volonté de savoir," in *Histoire de la sexualité*, Vol. I, 164-66; 194-95.

[41] Brunelle, 94.

[42] René Bary, *L'Esprit de cour ou les conversations galantes*, 219.

[43] Antoine de Courtin, *Traité de la jalousie*, 179; 151-52. Lewis' analysis stresses the role played by the headless corpses in Bluebeard's identity. If one conceives of the villain's castle as a construction of the self, the cadavers, erotically connoting absorption and consumption, are centrally situated in the *cabinet*, at the very core of Bluebeard's identity. Lewis, 211.

When Bluebeard's wife contemplates her slain predecessors, a macabre configuration of the traditional subordination of women, the body she represents accedes to the knowledge that Cartesian rationalism reserves for the mind, the latter being masculinized in the writings on female nature. In a reversal of the century's theorized marital protocol, the heroine occupies the center of vision usually reserved for a male character. Timmermans has shown how the *femme savante*, the learned woman, was nearly unanimously discredited by the latter seventeenth century. Perceived as a threat to order, women's intellectual aspirations would presumably enable them to assume public functions traditionally exercised by men: "La femme savante dans la littérature sert de repoussoir à la femme idéale, que celle-ci soit connue comme une ménagère ignorante, une ménagère instruite, ou comme une mondaine cultivée."[44] Bluebeard challenges this disruption of order by attempting to reinstate his dominance in the customary fashion: "il allait lui abattre la tête." Clearly, this symbolic yet potentially deadly gesture literally seeks to cut off the heroine from the knowledge she dared claim as her own. According to her mate's grisly calculations, only the fall of the cutlass will force his imprudent wife to take her prescribed place in the bloody tomb.

Bluebeard's fantasy of power is sustained at the high price of female blood. Therefore, the tale's first moral appropriately condemns *le sexe*, as Perrault refers to women, whose unfortunate intellectual curiosity "*Coûte* souvent bien des regrets," and "*coûte* trop cher" (emphasis added). Fitting terms, one might add, for fairy-tale characters who almost without exception view the marriage contract as an economic transaction. From the very beginning, this shrewd daughter of a noblewoman proves herself a fitting match for her conniving husband. Both Bluebeard and his wife wed out of financial interest, both break contracts, both are mutually deceptive.[45] The heroine enters into the marriage contract with a great deal of self-interest and very few if any romantic illusions. Every bit as artful as her mate, this young aristocrat shows a remarkable flexibility, a willingness to compromise with the ideals of her class in order to flourish in the newly emerging order of things. When condemned to die by the knife and join her predecessors, the heroine buys time until the arrival of her avenging brothers. Then, in a stunning theatrical reversal, the wife inherits Bluebeard's enormous fortune and enriches her family with the spoils of the

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[44] See Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*, 330; 352; 359.

[45] Lewis rightfully stresses the parallelism between Bluebeard and his wife in regard to knowledge, transgression and self-interest (205-08).

murdered financier: "Il se trouva que la Barbe bleue n'avait point d'héritiers, et qu'ainsi sa femme demeura maîtresse de tous ses biens" (153).

Combining equal parts of noble generosity and "bourgeois" commercial sense,[46] the heroine parcels out her wealth a bit like a careful business woman: "Elle employa *une partie* à marier sa soeur Anne avec un jeune gentilhomme . . . *une autre partie* à acheter des Charges de Capitaine à ses deux frères; et *le reste* à se marier à un fort honnête homme . . ." (153-54, emphasis added). Clearly, this enterprising heroine seems to have greater affinities with Sleeping Beauty's famished mother-in-law than with the self-effaced wives of "Griselidis" and "Sleeping Beauty." She enriches her family without sacrificing her own happiness. Indeed, since the epithet "fort honnête homme" designates both her former and present mate, it would not be surprising if Bluebeard's replacement is yet another financier or other parvenu meant to further embellish the coffers of the heroine and her family. Perhaps, in time, this noble daughter will even join the ranks of Perrault's obstreperous matriarchs.

The second moral surely reinforces this interpretation. Referring to the concluding role reversal, the narrator tauntingly asserts that "On a peine à juger qui des deux est le maître." While certain critics have viewed this "modern" moral as indicative of women's potentially equal position in the marital hierarchy,[47] its parentage with Perrault's earlier conservative *Apologie* would appear to argue otherwise. Describing the wife who violates the traditional conjugal chain of command, Perrault's sympathies seem unambivalent: "Si l'on la [the wife] voit souvent résoudre et décider, / C'est que le foible époux ne sçait pas commander."[48] However, ambiguity marks this tale in which the portrait of a newly assertive heroine is haunted by the tableau of her slain sisters at the center of the sinister castle. Like the indelible mark of blood on the key to the forbidden chamber, this morbid image taints the unstable mirror of memory.

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[46] Lewis has arrived at a similar conclusion. He interprets the ending as a "definitive sign of the aristocracy's drift into complicity and accommodation with the power and values of an ascendant bourgeoisie" (285).

[47] See, for example, Lewis, 203. Lewis interprets the tale's conclusion as a reinstatement of the masculine order. The heroine will no longer challenge authority, rather, she chooses a second marriage to another "fort honnête homme." According to Lewis, patriarchal order is reestablished because the true *honnête homme* dissimulates the differences between men and women that Bluebeard insists on underscoring (245). Yet, it should be remembered that the notion of sexual difference played an important role in promoting women's prominent position in polite *honnête* society: those who explained women's prominent place in a society based on the art of sociability, cited women's essential difference from men as the basis for their superiority in well-defined cultural matters.

Jeanne Morgan was one of the first Perrauldian scholars to analyze the dual morals in the *Contes*. See *Perrault's Morals for Moderns*.

"CENDRILLON"

The weak husband mocked in the *Apologie* reappears in "Cendrillon," the sixth tale of the collection. By all appearances a member of the lesser nobility or an impoverished noble, this widower gentleman takes as his second wife a haughty woman who "le gouvernait entièrement" (171). Cinderella's father, who welcomes this wealthy woman and her daughters into the heart of his family, becomes in so doing the agent of his own daughter's disgrace; the young noblewoman, who "n'osait s'en plaindre à son père qui l'aurait grondée," demurs to the newcomers because she fears her father's displeasure. The evil stepmother, perhaps the daughter of a financier or other successful parvenu, shares important traits with her predecessor Bluebeard. Most especially, she too is associated with luxury, since she has provided the magnificent apparel and fine appointments that distinguish her own daughters' circumstances from those of the shoddily clothed and ill-housed heroine. "La Barbe bleue" and "Cendrillon," which refer to the exact same "miroirs où elles se voyaient depuis les pieds jusqu'à la tête," engage in an uneasy celebration of materialism. Both at once denigrate and promote an ideology fashioned on conspicuous wealth, both focus on misalliances in order to incorporate gender role reversals that mock traditional notions of marital hierarchy. Whether her reign be provisional as in "La Belle au bois dormant," or lasting, as implied by the conclusion of "Barbe bleue," the female head of household gives fair warning that, although the body synonymous with women is still in the moralists' house, that house is in disarray.

"Cendrillon"'s disordered household is built upon the authority of the domineering stepmother: "qui dit une belle-mère, dit une marastre; qui dit une marastre dit une tigresse . . . on donne indifféremment le nom de marastre à tout ce qui est cruel."[49] The despised stepmother or mother-in-law reflects the conflicting interests that could pit younger and older generations of women from different families against one another. New wives of widowers were particularly sensitive to the needs of their own children, whose interests could be compromised by the offspring of their husband's first marriage.[50] In Perrault's tales, this negative figure impinges on the sanctity of the noble household sustained by respect for the purity of the bloodline. Cinderella's stepmother embodies the forces of luxury which were blamed for undermining the society of orders by obscuring the distinctions of rank. Ostentation and expense mark the new wife, who insinuates herself into the aristocratic milieu by rectifying the gentlemanly widower's financial distress.

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[48] *Apologie des femmes,* 9.

From the standpoint of the aristocratic ideology of lineage, misalliances "ne sont pas moins communes que fatales à la décadence des Maisons."[51] It would appear that the father is not reluctant to endanger his own daughter's welfare in exchange for securing his precarious economic situation. Perhaps he resembled others of the century's indigent nobles, who, faced with financial ruin, felt that they had little choice but to bargain with the interests of their daughters or younger sons. It is well known that, during the second half of the century, marriages between men of the high nobility and daughters of the newly ennobled or the wealthy were not uncommon. Nobles sought to provide for their increasingly expensive life style, while the commoners they wed sought the prestige conferred by a title.

The stepmother's two daughters, who, we are told, resemble their mother in every way, are but an extension of the latter's nefarious presence. Cinderella's noble demeanor, ridiculed by the menial tasks imposed on her, is particularly challenged by a new set of power relations based on conspicuous consumption. Resembling many of the socially mobile *salonnières*,[52] the stepsisters subscribe to a sartorial code that equates status with luxury.[53] These "Demoiselles," a term usually referring to young noblewomen, assert their claim to high birth by flaunting their red velvet gowns and diamond jewelry. However, the system of alliances that sustained aristocratic ideology is undermined by these false damsels. Cinderella's fashion-conscious stepsisters, like the *salonnières* described by Michel de Pure and Madeleine de Scudéry,[54] negate the family and the ideology of lineage implied by the previous, presumably idyllic relations between Cinderella and her father. "On donne par abus ce nom ["Demoiselle"] aux filles et aux femmes qui sont un peu bien-mises, qui ont quelque air, quelque bien considérable," explains Richelet.

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[49] Courtin, 238-39.

[50] See Warner on the rivalry between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, 226-28.

[51] Mainville, 67.

[52] A good half of the salon women listed in Antoine de Somaize's *Dictionnaire des précieuses* come from newly ennobled families rather than from the ancient nobility. See Lougee, 113-37.

[53] See Lougee, 72-73. According to the era's antifeminists, exquisite apparel served to blur class distinctions and endanger established social strictures.

To be sure, our pretentious arrivistes are invited to the prince's ball because they have established a name for themselves—"elles faisaient grande figure dans le Pays" (172)—and not on account of their noble status. "Always in front of their mirror," the stepsisters are continuously obliged to recreate their identity according to the dictates of court society, which demanded increasingly elaborate attire as a measure of social distinction. Fénelon for one, recognized that sartorial elegance facilitated social ascent and assimilation of the newly ennobled into the old nobility. With this in mind, the stepsisters' seemingly innocuous conversation involving floral-patterned gold coats and intricate hairstyles indicates an obsession with power. This was precisely the view of Fénelon, who interpreted women's preoccupation with fashion as a desire for authority: "les chemins qui conduisent les hommes à l'autorité et à la gloire leur étant fermés, elles tâchent de dédommager . . . de la vient qu'elles aspirent tant à la beauté et à toutes les graces extérieures . . . ." According to Fénelon, women's attachment to finery and novelty threatened the established order: "Dès qu'il n'y a plus de règle pour les habits et les meubles, il n'y en a plus d'effectives pour les conditions . . . ."[55] When Cinderella's nouveau riche stepsisters are invited to the prince's ball, their ascendancy as well as her debasement is recognized by the monarchy. In the aftermath, a new configuration of power emerges, one that bespeaks the conflicting values embraced by the ideology of race and the life styles of the court. The former called for the surveillance of the sexes, whereas the latter promoted a degree of sexual freedom.[56]

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[54] De Pure, *La Prétieuse ou le mystère des ruelles*, published in 1656-57; Scudéry, "Histoire de Sapho," in *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*, published in 1649-53. See also Lougee, 90.

[55] For both citations, see *De l'éducation des femmes*, 149.

[56] See Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*, 126.

When the stepmother assumes direction of the household, female sensuality does indeed transgress the ideal of "mute eloquence" promoted by Lescale,[57] nonetheless its expression is fettered by the very wealth through which it speaks. Once enlightened by her fairy-godmother's "lessons" on how to transform lowly objects into high culture, pumpkins into carriages and rats into coachmen, Cinderella, too, will adopt the new materialism that has overtaken her father's house. The fairy compensates for the ill-intentioned stepmother by providing her noble charge with the accouterments required to make her debut in high society. For although the heroine is naturally gracious and eloquent, she must be initiated into the realities of social life in a seventeenth-century world in which the old aristocracy is obliged to compete with newcomers in order to survive.

In a litany of metamorphoses that underscore beneficial exchanges, the fairy godmother, "la dressant." "l'instruisant," initiates Cinderella into the art of compromise.[58] The dynamic fairy dispels the tearful heroine's inertia, while introducing her to the rudimentary principles of economic exchange. The instant wealth occasioned by the fairy's magic wand can symbolize the new power of the monetary, visible to all Perrault's contemporaries, whether they be found at court, salon, or in the streets of Paris depicted in Sorel's *Francion*. Yet, the treasures meted out by the fairy, from fabulous equipage to priceless ball gown, include neither the freedom of movement nor the autonomy that limitless wealth can imply. On the contrary, the profusion of gifts signaling the fairy's beneficence take on a quite different meaning in light of the very last item to embellish her body: the glass slippers, "the prettiest in the world."

Antithesis of the seven-league boots seized by the hero of the last tale of the collection, "Le Petit Poucet," Cinderella's shimmering footwear at once assures her immobility and ensures that she will never accomplish Poucet's marvelous feats. Rather, the heroine's fragile slippers suggest fettered mobility, while recalling the unfortunate destiny of another heroine, Little

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[57] See ch. I.

[58] My reading of "Cendrillon" presumes the heroine's original noble status, which is temporarily obscured by the measures taken by her father to relieve his impoverishment. This fairy tale thus conforms to the structure of the genre, which presents an initial fall from grace that is consequently rectified. Lewis, citing Norbert Elias, interprets the tale as inscribing the heroine's trajectory from low to high status. The latter is accomplished by the civilizing process as represented by the magnificent gown, an emblem of the court society's ideology of controlled, magnificent appearance (158-59).

Red Riding Hood, who ventures outside the house and into the jaws of a ravenous ogre-like wolf. Cinderella's glass slippers should keep the heroine well within the bounds prescribed for her by the century's theorists on the nature of women. As we have seen, Fénelon warned that "les fréquentes sorties de la maison et les conversations qui peuvent donner l'envie de sortir souvent, doivent être évitées." Grenaille too, conceded that, while "les Dames doivent estre un peu remuantes . . . J'ayme bien mieux qu'elles soient invisibles dans les maisons."[59]

When Cinderella arrives at the prince's ball, her precarious liberty symbolized by the shoes of glass is further imperiled. Recalling the mirrors that reflect the stepsisters' image through the prism of an elite sartorial code, the mirror of the court, that collective point of perspective through which the heroine achieves social recognition, transforms her into spectacle: "on était attentif à contempler les grandes beautés de cette inconnue;" "Toutes les Dames étaient attentives à considérer sa coiffure et ses habits" (174). The king himself authorizes this celebration of beauty enhanced by wealth: "Le Roi même, tout vieux qu'il était, ne laissait pas de la regarder" (174). Exchanging its admiration for her autonomy, the rapt adulation of the court integrates Cinderella into its midst. Like his fellow heroes in "Griselidis" and "La Belle au bois dormant", "Cendrillon"'s prince, "occupé à la considérer" (174), perceives the heroine as a spectacle not because of his gender, but as an inevitable consequence of his participation in the courtly sphere. While it may be true that Cinderella's freedom is circumscribed by the hero's romanticized vision, his own independence has long since been compromised. To a certain degree, his very love for the heroine is conditional upon the court society, whose enraptured gaze dictates in part the desire of its sovereign.

In a communal expression of satisfaction and pleasure, wealth is sanctioned by the court, for whom Cinderella serves as the emblem of luxury. The insistent gaze of the court society radiates out like a centrifugal force from the king and prince to engulf the heroine in a sea of praise—"On n'entendait qu'un bruit confus" (174). Focusing entirely on the heroine, whose individual identity is appropriated by the collective perspective, the ball scene presents in tableau form what has long been recognized as women's central role in court culture. "Natural" authorities on taste, language, and manners, women were at the epicenter of the new values of civility that flourished in worldly circles. Once passed through the sieve of the civilizing gaze, the heroine's natural superiority is transformed into a product of culture. Nonetheless, Cinderella's perfection is emphatically associated with her physical nature; her body is indeed highlighted by the jewel-studded finery with which it is assimilated. Having been metamorphosed into a precious gem, the ornamented female body is poised to become an object of pleasurable consumption. To illustrate the point, one need only mention the case of André du Chesne, whose version of Neo-Platonism expanded the notion of the equivalence between beauty and goodness by including luxurious ornamentation in his definition of beauty. Inviting women to deck themselves in precious jewels and vestments, Du Chesne argued the cause of luxury, while implicitly offering the portrait of women as objects of conspicuous consumption.[60]

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[59] Fénelon, 112; Grenaille, *Les Plaisirs des dames*, 210.

Cinderella's pedestal at the heart of the court economy appears to be yet another version, albeit palatial, of the confinement of *le sexe* advocated by theoreticians on the nature of women. And yet, the reifying of female sensuality typical of the *Contes du temps passé*, appears to dispel the mysteries of femininity so evident in the tracts defining women. Instead, the *Contes* often subject the female body to a quantifying process with economic overtones. For example, Jeanne Morgan has shown that in "Les Fées," the royal hero gives short shrift to his bride's high birth and noble qualities in order to focus on the diamonds and pearls that accompany her every utterance: "Le fils du Roi en devint amoureux, et considérant qu'un tel don valait mieux que tout ce qu'on pourrait donner en mariage à une autre, l'amena au Palais du Roi son père où il l'épousa" (167).[61] This son of royalty adopts a mercantile perspective usually considered anathema to his class. In the same vein, the king of "Le Chat botté" exercises his parental prerogative of choosing a mate for his daughter after a perusal of the "marquis"'s treasures, to which his daughter is suggestively assimilated by metonymy.

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[60] See Lougee, 39-40. It is interesting to note that Du Chesne's apology of luxury is included in a book dedicated to a financier. "While other feminists were content to argue that luxury was ethically neutral, intrinsically neither good nor bad, Du Chesne urged women to ornament themselves, drawing explicitly the portrait of women as objects of conspicuous consumption which was implicit in the abstractions of Neo-Platonism from the beginning."

[61] See Morgan, 91.

The reification implied by the lavishly ornamented body is eloquently summarized by the glass slippers, the sole item of Cinderella's marvelous garb to withstand the demystifying power of the stroke of midnight. Ever attentive that her noble protégé assimilate her mentor's lessons on the art of compromise, the fairy punishes Cinderella for reneging on their contract by transforming her exquisite apparel into rags. The shimmering footwear alone remains intact, a promise of final integration into the space reserved for the newly savvy heroine in the emerging order of things. Unfit for travel, the dainty slippers serve to restrain adventurous impulses while at the same time acting as a kind of symbolic double for the heroine. Once the prince retrieves Cinderella's lost shoe, its status as a precious synecdoche of the female body is clear: we learn that "le fils du Roi l'avait ramassée" and that "il n'avait fait que la regarder pendant tout le reste du bal" (176). The prince's gaze passes from the heroine to the slipper with which she is equated by metonymy. Indeed, the captured slipper is the accomplished hunter's prize, since the heroine flees the ball as light-footedly as a "doe" that the prince fails to "trap." The hero's envisioning of the slipper is at once a metaphor for arrested movement and a pledge that the heroine, representing the nobility, will be co-opted into the dominant order of the court; the future sovereign's masterful perspective assures that the stepmother's provisional rule will cede to the king's, the matriarchy to Salic law. Suggesting a compromise between the throne and the nobility that Cinderella embodies, the transfixed slipper implies that the aristocracy will forego a certain degree of freedom while exchanging traditional privileges for new ones.

The perfect fit of the heroine's foot to the slipper, which "était juste comme de cire," clarifies its synecdochic status as an integral part of her body, a representation or possible substitute for that body. The term "synecdoche," whose Greek origin signifies "act of taking together;" "understanding one thing with another,"[62] implies, as Kenneth Burke has noted, "a relation of convertibility between the two terms."[63] The prince thus envisions his lady love through the intermediary of a fantastic object, which, according to Freud, represents female sexuality. The foot itself was often conceived of as a sexual symbol in ancient mythology.[64] More specifically in this case, the frail slipper of glass renders visual a central tenet of the treatises on women, that is, the frequent assimilation of women's nature with the valorized engendering body. As Berriot-Salvadore's study of the depiction of women in Renaissance medicine makes clear, the notion of woman as a precious but fragile container, "précieux instrument de la génération," has its roots in the sixteenth century.[65] Cinderella's magic slipper metaphorically encloses her within what the century considered women's most valued and mysterious function.

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[62] *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 840.

[63] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 508.

[64] Freud, *Trois Essais sur la théorie de la sexualité*, 40 and note 20, 172.

However, Perrault departs from the ideologies expressed by theoreticians on women's nature by focusing more intently on the object as opposed to the generative process itself. Such an object-mediated expression of sexual desire can be related to the economic dimension which permeates the *Contes du temps passé* as a whole.[66] "Cendrillon"'s fetishism was announced by the preceding "Peau d'Ane," whose hero-prince tenderly guards the heroine's ring, while publicizing his intention to marry the damsel whose finger fits the jewel. In both tales, the focus on the limbs' extremities suggests a concern with movement. Fitting the body to the object restricts its mobility by confining it to the courtly sphere of established order. Neither Peau d'Ane's adventure on the margins of society nor Cinderella's brush with magic in her stepmother's household can challenge the finality of the perfect fit, whether through ring or slipper. Taking possession of the errant body, the glass shoe, that is the body riveted and sublimated by the prince's rational gaze, suggests Descartes' dream of the diamond-like body—"d'une matière aussi peu corruptible que les diamants."[67] Both the chimerical ideal of the dazzling "corps diamant" and the scintillating slipper can represent not only arrested mobility, but arrested development as well. Fetishism, not unlike the Cartesian dismissal of sexual differences, is in part defined as the denial of difference and the desire for sexual sameness.[68]

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[65] *Un Corps, un destin: la femme dans la médecine de la Renaissance*, 202. Berriot-Salvadore thus describes the depiction of women in Renaissance medicine: "Mais délivrée de son imperfection originelle, la femme semble alors un monde clos dont le centre est ce mystérieux organe appelé utérus. La théorie de "l'utérocentrisme" devient origine et confluent de toute une symbolique féminine. L'incertitude même de la terminologie scientifique enrichit le pouvoir fantasmatique de ce qui n'est d'abord qu'une description anatomique. Utérus, matrice, mère: des mots qui désignent tantôt l'organe, tantôt l'être tout entier" (199).

[66] In note 14 to the First Essay on sexuality, Freud wrote: "La différence la plus caractéristique entre notre vie érotique et celle de l'antiquité consiste en ce que, dans l'antiquité, l'accent était mis sur la pulsion, alors que nous le mettons sur l'objet. Pendant l'antiquité, on glorifiait la pulsion, et cette pulsion ennoblissait l'objet . . . tandis que, dans les temps modernes, nous méprisons l'activité sexuelle en elle-même et ne l'excusons en quelque sorte que par suite des qualités que nous retrouvons dans son objet" (171).

[67] René Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode* in *Oeuvres et lettres*, 143.

SACRIFICIAL BODIES

From another perspective, Cinderella's shoes of glass suggest the threat of spilled blood that plagues Perrault's aristocratic female characters. Throughout the *Contes*, the woman of nobility, guarantor of the blood line, is menaced by a panoply of potentially lethal instruments including spinning-wheel needles, knives, and cutting glass. To a certain degree, Perrault's tales enact a death wish for the aristocracy, which is symbolically menaced through the constantly endangered female progenitor. In effect, the degradation of noble birth is no stranger to the Perraldian corpus. A case in point is "Riquet à la houppe," which depicts royal maternity in a state of unmitigated affliction. "Riquet"'s bereaved queens give birth to monsters whose defects are distributed according to a sexual polarity originating in the *Querelle des femmes*. However, the most emphatic dismissal of female nobility, the matriarchal house, and the body's disorderly reign, is found in "Le Petit Poucet," the concluding tale of the *Contes du temps passé*.

"Le Petit Poucet" rejoins "La Barbe bleue" through the sanguine image of the ogre's seven crown-bearing daughters "egorgées et nageant dans leur sang" (198). Although their deceived father slaughters them unwittingly, this immolation of female "royalty"—"il coupa sans balancer la gorge à ses sept filles" (197)—is a complicitous wink at Salic law. These talented princesses, who "promettaient beaucoup, car elles mordaient déjà les petits enfants pour en sucer le sang" (196)— are excluded from succession to their father's reign of terror with the fall of a knife. Their destiny recalls that of the "Belle au bois dormant"'s ogress-queen, who dives into a cauldron of vipers and thereby signals an end to her matriarchal power. At a time when women's increasing prominence elicits repressive legislation and diatribes against society ladies, Perrault responds by a symbolic eradication of female sovereignty. His fairy tales mockingly yet decisively put severe limits on the reign of women. Perrault at times appears to agree with Fénelon, who asserted that women's functions should correspond to their "natural" gifts for housewifery: "Voici donc les occupations des femmes . . . une maison à régler, un mari à rendre heureux, des enfants à bien élever."[69]

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[68] See Charles Bernheimer, "Fetishism and Allegory in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*" in *Flaubert and Postmodernism*, 160-61. Descartes elides the question of sexual difference; the Cartesian *corps machine* is asexual.

The aristocratic blood that flows so abundantly in Perrault's tales rivals the spilling of royal blood that haunts Racine's *Thebaïde*. Clearly, if the newly emerging state relied on a family model, it was not inspired by the aristocratic example. Both Racine and Perrault represent either the destruction or transformation of the royal family, whether through incest or misalliance. As we have seen, misalliance resembles incest in that it can signal perverted or corrupted blood together with endangered family hierarchies. The bloodletting in Racine's play and in the tales can be conceived of as a rite signaling the imminent passage from one world order to another. The shedding of noble blood suggests an unstable world in transition toward a newly emerging order in which aristocrats share power with bourgeois.[70] In Perrault's prose tales, female sovereigns in particular are purged of the noble blood that symbolized the power of ancestral alliances. The noble female, symbolically divorced from the ideology of lineage that underlay the aristocracy, is then poised to take part in the enterprise of state-building through the intermediary of *mésalliance*.

Perrault's metaphorical sacrifice of the noble female takes on new meaning in the light of René Girard's analysis of violence in primitive societies.[71] According to Girard, those societies lacking a judicial system act to contain violence through a system of sacrifice. Foregoing direct retaliation against the guilty party, the sacrificial ceremony seeks to arrest the interminable cycle of violence involved in murder and ensuing acts of retaliation. Sacrifice is meant to prevent the escalation of violence by victimizing an outsider, whether an animal, a foreigner, or a society member considered inessential or inferior. According to sacrificial logic, outsider status ensures that the victim will not be avenged by powerful kin or allies. By dint of the same line of reasoning, grounded in the avoidance of the vengeance that sacrifice is meant to defuse, the victim can resemble yet not be identical to the real object of violence. In some primitive societies, the victim substitutes for and is offered to all members of society in order to protect the community from its own violence (18).

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[69] Fénelon, 92-93.

[70] See Terrance Cave, "Between Corneille and Racine: *La Thébaïde*," and Roland Barthes, *Sur Racine*. For Cave, Racine's play represents the social instability of the modern world in which absolute truth is absent. Barthes equates Créon with what he defines as the emerging bourgeois order and the voice of the individual.

[71] Girard, *La Violence et le sacré*.

Although "primitive" scarcely describes the time frame of the very contemporary *Contes du temps passé,* the fairy-tale genre by definition involves an indeterminate or abstract temporal framework. The Perraldian tales do indeed seem to offer a textual transposition of those sacrifices, which according to Girard, effect a collective transfer at the victim's expense. One might surmise that the violence inherent in the changing society of seventeenth-century France is figuratively deflected from the social body to the body of women; the blood of women is symbolically offered to appease the violence and conflict arising from social change. Female characters are merely the sacrificial substitute for the real object of violence, social change itself, perhaps as embodied in the king. And while the century's code of propriety would scarcely admit of attacking even a fictive king, the royal or noble heroine is fair game. She is, unequivocally, the progenitor of the ruling class. Girard does recognize women's status as inconsequential members of society, yet he asserts that they are never sacrificed since such an act would encourage either the husband's or the father's retaliation. (25). Our *conteur*, however, can claim the immunity of fiction in electing women, especially noble ones, as his victims. Moreover, as Girard himself admits, "Plus la crise est aïgue, plus la victime doit être précieuse" (33).

The sacrificial role assigned to many of Perrault's heroines can also be linked to the century's equation of women with (repressed or domesticated) sexuality. While it is true that Perrault's women have for the most part a more conflicted relation to their sexual natures, echoes of Le Moyne and Poullain, from the "principe qui engendre," to the periphrastic "c'est en elles qui se passe ce qu'il y a de plus curieux à connoistre, sçavoir, comment se produit l'homme," resound throughout the *Contes du temps passé*.[72] For Perrault as for the theoreticians on women's nature, sensuality and sexuality are the province of the female. And, as Girard has shown, sexuality in many societies is considered to be a site of disorder, associated as it is with the violence of rape, the pain of childbirth and the transgressions of incest and adultery. Sexuality is thought impure because associated with violence and bloodshed, a violence often symbolized by the female body.[73] Just as the seventeenth-century woman invented by theorists and moralists is associated with the blood of childbirth, Perrault's women, from Sleeping Beauty to the seven ogresses, are tainted with the trace of spilled blood.

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[72] The first citation is from Le Moyne's *La Gallerie des femmes fortes*, the second from Poullain's *De l'égalité des deux sexes*, 94. See also ch. I of this study.

The female body, overdetermined in the contemporary consciousness through its association with sexuality and specifically childbirth, serves as a kind of magnet for violence. Attracting or absorbing violence unto itself, the sensual female symbolically eradicates this social plague from the surrounding community. The mystery enshrouding the female body evoked by feminist and antifeminist theorists alike, is perhaps related to this phantasmic yet no less real, violence inseparable from the era's notions of female sexuality. One might even surmise that theoreticians' recourse to the inexplicable plays a protective role in deflecting aggression, both real and imagined, from *le sexe*. Small wonder then, that both hypothetical women and fairy-tale heroines can scarcely forego the ubiquitous chastity necessary to contain the violence that symbolically marks them. In an age of change and disorder, the body's unbridled sexuality, identified almost exclusively with women, is one disorder too many.

"LE SEXE" REVISITED

While Perrault's fairy tales enact in part the theories of gendered hierarchy expressed in the writings on the nature of women, they often belie the ideal of chaste, silenced femininity as articulated in those tracts. Taking as our point of departure Foucault's definition of sexuality, we can detect an evolution in the era's notions of female sensuality, and by extension, sexuality itself. Foucault conceived of sexuality as a point of juncture between biology and history, a convergence between the body and a given configuration of power. The "notion of sex" is a historical construct, a discursive creation by which power invests and consequently defines the human body. Foucault's analysis then, emphasizes the speculative dimension of sexuality, an ideal point, a "dense transfer point for relations of power."[74]

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[73] Girard, 55-58. Girard thus explains the link between women, sexuality, and violence: "Il y a lieu de se demander en outre si le processus de symbolisation ne répond pas à une 'volonté' obscure de rejeter toute la violence sur la femme exclusivement. Par le biais du sang menstruel, un transfert de violence s'effectue, un monopole de fait s'établit au détriment du sexe féminin" (58-9). As Berriot Salvadore points out, the menstruating woman has been considered impure since Antiquity. For Aristotle, the glance of a menstruating woman can tarnish a mirror. The Renaissance *conteurs* subscribe to this tradition that considers menstrual blood to be a kind of venom (24-25).

Clearly, seventeenth-century speculation on women's nature as examined in the first chapter sought first to confine sexuality to the parameters of the female body, second to domesticate the latter, all the while alluding to its irrepressible mystery. In the era's musings on women's essential nature, the pervasive discourse on female chastity attempts to integrate the "unruly" body into the existing power system. The body effaced by *pudeur*, is nonetheless compensated by the promise of a special form of intuitive knowledge that owes little to rationality and everything to women's imagined essence. One might even surmise that the mythologies inspired by women's procreative role served as a kind of restitution for the loss of political and legal power.

According to Lougee, the preoccupation with female chastity in the era's writings on women expresses the desire for a stable society respective of hereditary status.[75] If this be true, one must acknowledge that the *pudeur* distinguishing Griselidis and Peau d'Ane is challenged by a bevy of haughty stepmothers, regal mothers-in-law, and financially savvy heroines who populate the *Contes du temps passé*. This need not be surprising, since Perrault's ironic and even duplicitous tales incorporate paradox and contradiction at every turn. For each submissive Griselidis and docile Sleeping Beauty, there is a dominating stepmother and a calculating wife. In large part dismissive of the reputed mysteries of femininity cited by many theoreticians, Perrault elects instead to lower the veil of chastity while liberating the body to speak. Indeed, this master storyteller tests the values grounded in sexual repression, all the while appearing to valorize them.

Perhaps more than any of the contemporary mores incorporated into the Perraldian corpus, it is the controversial practice of *mésalliance* which promotes a heretofore unimaginable dialogue between the newly voluble body (of female sensuality) and the increasingly unsteady (rational) perspective through which it viewed. While the nostalgia for a more stable society of orders resurfaces in the gentle demeanor of Cinderella and the obsequious inclinations of Sleeping Beauty, a future encompassing women who compete with men for power creates a palpable tension that undermines vague longings for the past. Misalliance and the economic exchanges that define it usher in a line of articulate heroines whose prominence has much to do with the increasing importance of wealth in regulating social and political life. Unequal matches destabilize traditional forms of social stratification, and in so doing, encourage enterprising females to calculate their self-interests and those of their kin, according to the new universal measure of monetary exchange.

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[74] Foucault, 136. The "notion of sex" involves a mystification that obscures the "real" body. In this sense, sexuality is a "point of support" for relations of power.

[75] Lougee associates the demand for chastity solely with those writers whom she defines as antifeminist, that is, those who confined women's role to the private as opposed to the public sphere (92). However, both women's advocates and detractors were nearly unanimous in citing chastity as the preeminent feminine virtue. See ch. I of this study.

When money vies with the noble system of power built on blood alliances, a certain democratizing exchange takes place between male and female characters. Bluebeard's wife survives her husband's morbid instincts to inherit his wealth and enrich herself, as well as her family. Cinderella, having interiorized the fairy's lessons on the beneficial effects of exchange, emulates her predecessor by enhancing her status and establishing her sisters at court. Like the roturier Petit Poucet, these two heroines engage in venality to advance their own aristocratic interests; the morals condoning *arrivisme* in both "Cendrillon" and "Le Chat botté" attest that both aristocrats and commoners, men and women, used their wits to benefit from the buying and selling of offices. Stepmothers and mothers-in-law enter the noble household via their fortunes, while buying the right to disdain hierarchy and practice self-affirmation, however provisional. Denigrated as it may be, the matriarchal example suggests an alternate way of envisioning the distribution of familial authority. Clearly, misalliance is a paradoxical figure in the *Contes*. Although it is derided when it results in tyrannical female misrule, it is exonerated or simply ignored when it enables a clever noblewoman to outwit her diabolical mate.

Might one then assume that, on some counts, Perrault can be counted among women's advocates? Yes, in part. For although his *Apologie* confines women to the private sphere, his *Parallèle* highlights women's role as arbiters of culture and thus situates them, albeit ambiguously, in public life. The fairy tales present the same conflicting view of women's place in society. Female characters' aspirations to power are alternately derided and enabled. And while the sensual dimension that the century associated with women is often restrained, even reified, the Perraldian heroine can be assertively calculating. Enterprising female characters such as Bluebeard's wife, owe their superiority not to intuition or sentiment, but rather to their deliberate and careful reasoning.

Once again, the tales' inscription of *mésalliance* appears to be pivotal in ferreting out the feminist tendencies of these texts. Lougee has stressed that women's advocates, substituting behavior for birth, praised personal wealth, venality, and other controversial means of social advancement.[76] Perrault was probably intimately acquainted with these practices, since his own father was a lawyer and administrator involved in the creation and selling of offices. In certain of the *Contes*, women who engage in marriages with social unequals simultaneously enter into economic transactions that seem to disregard, or at the very least, underplay gender differences. It would appear that *mésalliance* and the unsettling of traditional hierarchies that it entails, is a passport to a degree of equality between the sexes largely unknown to tracts on women's nature. Yet, the underlying current of violence that is from time to time directed at female characters throughout the academician's fairy tales renders his ambivalent "feminism" disturbingly problematical.[77]

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[76] See Lougee, 45; 47; 49.

[77] Davis has stressed that women in early modern Europe had a conflicted relation to power. However, one need not assume that they were powerless. Women's problematical relation to power is eloquently inscribed in Perrault's fairy tales.

Chapter Three

Corps métamorphosés: Heroes and Heroines in the Tales of Aulnoy

ALTERNATIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Lamenting women's penchant for the pleasures of elite society, François de Grenaille concluded that "Tout va mal au logis parce qu'elles sont trop souvent à la campagne." He further stipulated that "en se divertissant dans les bois on fait quelquefois bien de mauvaises actions."[1] Such bucolic delights are enjoyed not only by seventeenth-century *salonnières* such as Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy but also her fairy-tale heroines, who forsake at once the conjugal house and the domesticated sensuality so widely evoked in the prescriptive literature on the nature of women. And although Grenaille warned that "Les lieux fabuleux ne sont pas propres pour les divertissements des Dames (194)," Aulnoy's fabulous geographies forego husband, children, family, state, and even women's celebrated chastity, in favor of a body in constant motion. This mobile body, Cartesian insofar as it shuns the preconceived notions associated with it, nonetheless challenges the concept of the *corps machine* through its numerous metamorphoses into speaking and reasoning animals. Aulnoy problematizes Descartes' polarization that distinguishes between the language of the body's appetites and passions, the much discussed *langage animal*, and the language of universal reason. Propelled into motion through metamorphosis and disguise, her heroes and heroines are at odds with the Cartesian dream of the inalterable diamond-like body that resurfaces from time to time in Perrault's tales. When the perspective is shifted from the Academy to the salon, the mastering gaze, precariously unsteady in the *Contes du temps passé*, is deprived of its focal point.

This chapter examines those tales of Aulnoy that use metamorphosis, and at times disguise, to flee the passive Cartesian body. The *conteuse* responded to her century's rhetorical construction of the body, be it the engendering female of moralist texts or the *corps machine* of the *Discours de la Méthode*, by enchanting her heroes and heroines in equal numbers. On the one hand, Aulnoy boldly explores through metamorphosis the male as well as the female body. In so doing, she challenges those treatises examined in the previous chapter that associated the body nearly exclusively with women. To be sure, treatises on the nature of men would have been considered frivolous in an age when traditional views from antiquity prevailed in defining sexual difference. And yet, one must recognize that the female body's striking evidence in moralist writings is due in part to the absence of its male counterpart.

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[1] *Les Plaisirs des dames*, 200; 226.

Aulnoy's fairy tales balance the sexual equation so that sensuality is no longer the exclusive province of women. Instead, the *conteuse's* heroes and heroines, who accede to knowledge via the adventures of the disguised and metamorphosed self, present an alternative to the body mastered by science, medicine, and moral philosophy, yet incapable in itself of leading to truth.[2] Aulnoy's enchanted bodies become a theater for self-discovery as well as a conduit for knowledge. Because the world is explored and thus known through the ever-changing body, the latter plays an active role in the quest for knowledge and truth. The fluid boundaries of the metamorphosed self enable the journeys away from the court into the forests and countrysides of counter-identities. It is through their sensual natures that heroes and heroines alike explore the Cartesian "livre du monde."[3] In Aulnoy's tales, the body in transformation is a world of exploration and discovery unto itself.

The era produced simultaneously a philosophy which subscribed to the Augustinian notion that "the mind has no sex,"[4] and a textual corpus that valorized the representation of women as engendering bodies. This confluence is evidently problematic for the question of female identity. At a time when the Cartesian subject was defined by distancing himself from that other designated as the body, the many women who embraced Cartesianism were, philosophically speaking, in a paradoxical situation. Since they were so eminently associated with the body by the majority of their contemporaries, women's place in Cartesian philosophy, in which the body is reduced to object status and the subject asexual, appears to be undermined by contradiction. For while Descartes did not distinguish between male and female minds, the tracts on women testify to the fact that they were not so easily rid of the long-standing prejudice associated with their physical nature.[5]

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[2] The body does have heuristic value, since it enables the meditation that initiates the subject's search for truth. In Descartes' *Sixième Méditation*, the body resists objectifying and seems capable of a certain knowledge. Yet, Descartes concludes that the senses, in and of themselves, contain no truth. See Deneys-Tunney, *Ecritures du corps*, 44;55. Deneys-Tunney delineates what she terms the body's "variable ontological status" in Descartes' writings on 69-70.

[3] *Discours de la Méthode*, Première Partie, 132. Like Descartes, Montaigne also cited the "grand monde," which he hoped would become "le livre de mon écolier," in "De L'Institution des enfants," *Essais* (I, 26) 77.

[4] In *De l'égalité des deux sexes*, the Cartesian Poullain expresses the notion of the asexual subject: "Il est aisé de remarquer, que la différence des sexes ne regarde que le corps: n'ayant proprement que cette partie qui serve à la production des hommes; et l'esprit ne faisant qu'y prêter son consentement, et le faisant en tous de la mesme

Indeed, one can imagine that the interplay between Cartesian philosophy and the writings on women may have reinforced somewhat the old notion of women's inferiority.[6] For the theoretical tracts' identification of women with the body—often valorized for its social utility but nonetheless opposed to the mind or soul—must be put into context with what has been widely recognized as Descartes' radicalizing of the dualist tradition deriving from Plato and Aristotle. The irrationality that the ancient philosophers had attributed to the inferior part of the soul was defined by Descartes as the unique prerogative of the body.[7] This displacement contributed to the Cartesian "disenchantment with the body," which was designated as the source of error, chimera, and madness.[8] Erica Harth has argued that Descartes' challenging of scholasticism indirectly valorized women's intellectual abilities by implying that the prejudices associated with women

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manière, on peut conclure qu'il n'a point de sexe" (59). According to Madeleine Alcover, Descartes explicitly posits women's inferiority in the *Primae Cogitationes*. Cited by Linda Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*, 381-82.

[5] Although Cartesianism did not distinguish between male and female minds, it has been credited with paving the way for the notion of a distinctive male and female consciousness. See Geneviève Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*, 48-50.

[6] A case in point is Antoine de Courtin, who uses Cartesian rationalism to prove the "natural" subordination of women. No matter the century or the geographical location, women have always given birth, reasons Courtin. This is a clear and distinct notion as well as a natural and permanent law. In consequence, women are "naturally" subservient to men. *Traité de la jalousie*, 373.

[7] On Descartes' radicalizing of this tradition, see Lloyd, 45-46; Deneys-Tunney, 38; Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity*, 93-94.

[8] See ch. I and Deneys-Tunney, 40-42.

were based on error. Many seventeenth-century women understood Descartes' distinction between the mind and the body to imply that all persons were equally endowed with reason. Yet, as Harth's discussion of the *Cartésiennes*, Anne de la Vigne, Marie Dupré, and Catherine Descartes, has shown, Descartes' female disciples challenged those tenets of objective rationalist discourse that disregard the contextual factors such as gender, that are involved in cognition. In regard to Cartesianism, women were at one and the same time included and excluded.[9]

According to Paul Hoffman, Descartes laid the groundwork for the notion of sexual equality all the while avoiding the question of identity.[10] On the other hand, the problem of identity is the prime focus of Aulnoy's metamorphosis tales. One might say that she responds to her century's "disenchantment with the body" by a corresponding enchantment that has the power to reintegrate that body, albeit provisionally, into a cosmos from which it is estranged. Given the era's discovery of other cultural perspectives and the ensuing awareness of the relativity of human knowledge, the body was increasingly seen as a barrier limiting the individual's experience and closing him or her off from what is often referred to as the Medieval and early Renaissance organic universe.

Aulnoy's metamorphosed characters seem to look back towards a pre-Cartesian worldview wherein the boundaries between self and universe, human and natural, are less clearly drawn.[11] Alternately investing the body with animal and human natures, metamorphosis explores and at times collapses the difference between humankind and nature. Clearly, Aulnoy's tales are not the province of the Cartesian subject who masters the phenomenological world by reducing it to an object, what Dalia Judovitz has called the "classic world view." On the contrary, they are the domain of Judovitz's "baroque self," whose metamorphic character is synonymous with a "self-in-process," one that exists in a fluid exchange with the world encompassing it.[12] Recalling the baroque characters of Honoré d'Urfé and Charles Sorel, Aulnoy's tales of metamorphosis can be understood as reflections on the definition of the self; they plot out the limits of the self and the universe at a moment when this distinction was gaining ground. Characters who abandon one form in favor of another appear to reject what Judovitz terms the closure of Cartesian subjectivity (20). Instead, like the baroque novels and plays that preceded them, Aulnoy's fairy tales are characterized by a circulation of identities. Metamorphosis explores alternative representations of subjectivity at the same time that it potentially undermines social hierarchy. Founded in part on the categorization of identities, the social order is hard put to accommodate the notion of multiple roles for any one individual.[13]

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[9] See Erica Harth's *Cartesian Women: Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime*, 3-12. Harth speaks of the "Cartesian legacy," which "contributed heavily to a totalizing rational discourse of abstract universality and objectivity from which women by the historical contingencies of their gender became excluded" (6). In Harth's perspective, the Cartesian discourse is one "whose supposed value neutrality concealed, among other things, the bias of gender" (12).

[10] *La Femme dans la pensée des lumières*, 59-61. Cited by Harth in *CW*, 9, note 21.

[11] Bordo refers to the individual's increasing sense of isolation from the external world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Bordo describes this situation by positing a new sense of locatedness: rather than merge with the universe, one is enclosed within the self and limited to one's own experience. The body serves to remind one of this bounded perspective (45; 59-73; 95).

THE BODY OF DESIRE AND THE BODY POLITIC

Referring to the education proper for a young noblewoman, Fénelon advised, "Réprimez sévèrement toutes leurs fantaisies."[14] The moralist might very well have been referring to the mother of "Chatte Blanche," found in Aulnoy's second fairy-tale collection, *Les Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode* (1698).[15] The heroine Chatte Blanche's mother, whose "inclination dominante était de voyager" (485), resembles a long line of restless heroines whose taste for adventure would surely have scandalized the prudent Fénelon. Constancia—"errante par le monde tantôt bergère . . . tantôt jardinière"—Florine—"commença[nte] son voyage, tantôt à pied, tantôt à cheval, tantôt par mer, tantôt par terre"—Babiole—"se hatâ[nte] donc de partir, sautant d'arbre en arbre, de branche en branche"—all join the mother of Chatte Blanche in a celebration of wanderlust.[16]

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[12] See *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes: The Origins of Modernity.* Judovitz differentiates the "baroque self", which distinguishes the writings of Montaigne, d'Urfé, and Sorel, from the Cartesian subject. Judovitz associates baroque and classical worldviews with Montaigne and Descartes respectively (1-25).

[13] See John D. Lyons, *A Theater of Disguise: Studies in French Baroque Drama, 1630-1660*, 2-10. Lyons points out that the confusion of identities was understood by both Plato and the seventeenth-century theoretician la Mesnardière, as inimical to the interests of a stable society. Both Plato's republic and La Mesnardière's *Poétique* are interested in categorizing identities according to established social roles.

[14] *De l'éducation des filles*, 152. See also ch. I.

[15] In *Nouveau Cabinet des fées*, IV, 455-517.

These peripatetic fantasies that Fénelon sought in vain to suppress, appropriate the "principe de mouvement" to travel out of the female body defined by theoreticians, and consequently away from the family hierarchies it sustains. In stark contrast to the images of confinement and immobility so common in moralist texts, the body in flight seems to threaten household stability, the "little state" upon which society is founded. Indeed, Chatte Blanche's queen mother, who questions the maternity so valorized in feminist and antifeminist tracts alike, incurs her kingly husband's wrath when she sacrifices her own daughter to her desire for forbidden fruit: "Quoi! s'écria le roi, nous n'avons point d'enfans, vous savez à quel point j'en désire, & pour manger deux ou trois pommes, vous avez été capable de promettre votre fille?" (492).

Aulnoy underscores the mother's overpowering sensuality by inscribing it at the tale's mid-point in the form of an embedded story, the first of two recounted by Chatte Blanche to the hero prince once she has assumed her womanly form. The queen mother's consuming desire to partake of the marvelous fruits enclosed in the inaccessible garden of the fairies' château causes her to fall dangerously ill. Another Phèdre, the queen enters the story dying of unfulfilled desire. This "reine mourante," who despairs of attaining the trees laden with delicious fruit, "en voulait manger ou mourir" (486). Agreeing to surrender her daughter to the fairies at birth in exchange for satisfying her craving, this irrepressible mother-to-be evokes Boileau's description of the "Femme desordonnée / Sans mesure et sans règle au vice abandonnée."[17] Referring to "le sexe," Richelieu too complained of the "Dérèglement de leurs Passions,"[18] which, as he saw it, ought to exclude women from positions of authority.

However, Aulnoy's parody of the misogynist stereotype of female lust strikes a more Racinian note when she describes the queen's cure, effected by a wave of the fairies' magic wand: "il lui sembla aussi-tôt qu'on lui ôtoit une robe fort pesante & fort dure, dont elle se sentoit comme accablée, & qu'il y avoit des endroits où elle tenoit davantage. C'étoit ceux où apparemment le mal étoit le plus grand" (488). Metaphorically liberated from social protocol as if from the constrictions of an elaborate garment, the queen gives free reign to her sensuality. Domna Stanton has shown how conformity to the aristocratic sartorial code, together with polished manners, confirmed one's membership in elite society. The body was transformed into an artifact by a complicated dress code that both obscured and enlarged it. Elegant clothing constituted part of a sign system, which if properly manipulated, signified superior status.[19] Discarding the symbolic weight of ceremonial dress eloquently expresses the desire to be free of constraining court etiquette as understood by Norbert Elias. Both Aulnoy's famished queen and Racine's Phèdre allude to the repression of forbidden passion by reference to the sartorial metaphor: "Que ces vaines ornements, que ces voiles me pèsent," laments Phèdre (I, 3 v. 158).

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[16] Constancia is the heroine of "Le Pigeon et la Colombe" in *NCF* V, 91-166; Florine's adventures are recounted in "L'Oiseau Bleu," *NCF* III, 62-121; Babiole is the heroine of the eponymous tale in *NCF* IV, 51-94.

[17] *Satire X* (v. 177-78) 152.

[18] *Testament politique*, 14.

However, unlike the doomed Racinian heroine, Aulnoy's queen is magically released. Her guilty yet eventually exonerated passion flows freely through the text's center as the fairies summon the objects of her desire. The enumerated forbidden fruits stream forth in an avalanche of sensuality toward their destination at the feet of the queen:

> La plus vieille fée mit ses doigts dans sa bouche, & siffla trois fois; puis elle cria: abricots, pêches pavis, brugnons, cerises, prunes, poires, bigarreaux, melons, muscats, pommes, oranges, citrons, groseilles, fraises, framboises, accourez à ma voix . . . . En même tems ils arrivèrent roulans, rampans, pêle-mêle, sans se gâter ni se salir . . . . (490)[20]

This proliferation of sensuous nature invades the tale at mid-point and infuses it with the queen's passion.[21] Disregarding all *bienséance*, the delighted queen, “se jeta dessus . . . elle les dévora plutôt qu’elle ne les mangea” (490). The queen’s sensual appetites are condoned by the king, who thus authorizes the expression of his wife’s passion: “Le roi les [fruits] mangeoit préférablement à tout ce qu’on pouvoit lui présenter” (491). Granted, after being informed of the queen’s pact with the fairies, the king responds by confining his wife to a desolate tower. And yet, at the fairies’ insistence, he eventually releases and exonerates her.

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[19] *The Aristocrat as Art*, 127-30.

[20] This enumeration of animated fruits ("roulans, rampans, pêle-mêle") has little in common with those enumerations that dissect the body into synecdoches. In certain of Perrault's tales, the latter type of enumeration tends to reify the body, which is subjected to a mastering intellect, a controlling point of view. Perhaps it is the sense of unfettered movement which distinguishes Aulnoy's enumeration: the fruits are represented as autonomous entities that do not pass through the sieve of a rational consciousness. On the contrary, this enumeration has little to do with rationality and much to say about the irrational libido.

[21] See Michèle Farrell, "Celebration and Repression of Feminine Desire in Mme. d'Aulnoy's Fairy Tale 'La Chatte Blanche'," 52-64. See especially 59: "D'Aulnoy's text proliferates at those very junctures that celebrate the experience of woman as active desiring subject, but is punctuated with lessons designed to disguise and repress that

In true Racinian fashion, Chatte Blanche, citing the “fautes de notre famille” (496), inherits her mother’s yearnings: “Si elle n’avoit pas voulu manger les fruits du jardin, je serois demeurée dans le royaume de mon père,” explains the heroine. Indeed, since the daughter’s birthright of transgressive passion occasions her metamorphosis, this tale can be said to originate in the mother’s desire.[22] Erring beyond the kingdom of her father, the heroine will shift shape, assume political power, and express her talents as a writer.

The second embedded story recited by the heroine to the prince demonstrates that, in her prior womanly state, Chatte Blanche did indeed inherit her mother’s proclivities for the passions of the flesh. Having been entrusted to the fairies, the heroine imprudently spurned their designated suitor and clandestinely wed the lover of her choice.[23] The fairies, like the tyrannical gods of classical tragedy, responded unsympathetically to her revolt against forced marriage by eliminating her lover and transforming her forthwith into a stunning white cat. Nonetheless, true to the vast majority of Aulnoy’s tales, this metamorphosis empowers the heroine, who converts her desire into poetry and presides over her own alternative court. Despite Richelieu’s reservations in regard to female rulers—“leur Molesse les rend incapables d’une Vertu male, nécessaire à l’administration”[24]— Chatte Blanche is

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experience.” Farrell identifies the mother’s desire as “the crux of the story’s intrigue” and recognizes that the ending *moralité*, which reprimands the Queen, is “tacked on.”

[22] In his recent *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France*, Lewis Seifert cites Aulnoy’s closing moral, which criticizes the mother’s “folly.” However, within the tale itself, the mother is entirely forgiven and reintegrated into the royal household. More important, the suggestive textual links between the mother’s desire and that of her daughter tend to underplay the mother’s lack of responsibility towards her offspring. For a discussion of the depiction of motherhood in Aulnoy’s tales, see 183-88.

[23] On the *conteuses’* representation of love and marriage, see Marcelle Maistre Welch, “La Femme, le mariage et l’amour dans les contes de fées mondains du XVIIème siècle français,” 47-58.

[24] *Testament politique*, 13-14.

definitely a political animal. And, in Aulnoy's political schema, desire and power are intimately related through the intermediary of writing.

The link between the mother's passion and the daughter's passion for power is expressed through the tale's topography: Chatte Blanche's court is located in the exact château whose sumptuous garden inspired her mother's longings.[25] Like the "tender geographies" of the seventeenth-century novels studied by Joan DeJean, desire and the state are here inseparable.[26] Moreover, this château of desire and political ambition is also one of fairy-tale writing. The wandering prince seeks refuge from a storm inside this literary palace signed "Aulnoy" and "Perrault":

> les murs étoient d'une porcelaine transparente, mêlée de plusieurs couleurs, qui représentoient l'histoire de toutes les fées . . . les fameuses aventures de Peau d'Ane, de Finette, de l'Oranger, de Gracieuse, de la Belle au bois dormant, de Serpentin Vert, & de cent autres, n'y étoient pas oubliées. (458)

The reference to Aulnoy's fairy-tale characters ("Finette," "L'Oranger," "Gracieuse," "Serpentin Vert") functions like a signature, which is equal to that of Perrault ("Peau d'Ane;" "La Belle au bois dormant"). This suggestion of equality between the salon writer and the academician is confirmed when the prince admires the heroine's intellect and talent for eloquence. According to the hero, Chatte Blanche is a fine candidate for membership in "Les académies fameuses des plus beaux esprits" (474).

The court of this learned worldly feline, "fort instruite des différens intérêts des princes & les autres choses qui se passent dans le monde" (464), and "plus savante qu'il n'est permis à une chatte de l'être" (474), is presented as an "ordre nouveau" (476) which both rivals and emulates that of Versailles.[27] Theater, ballet, carousels, fireworks, hunting outings, court intrigues, and even civil war animate this isolated court with its Versailles-inspired interiors. Chatte Blanche's domain is distinguished by courtiers who, according to the visiting prince, have "plus d'esprit et de galanterie que les nôtres" (469), and by "poètes qui ont infiniment d'esprit" (463). Like Madeleine de Scudéry's heroine Sapho, the regal feline is herself a poet who transforms the body of desire into the body of writing by composing verses "d'un style si passionné, qu'il sembloit qu'elle avoit le coeur tendre & que l'on ne pouvoit parler comme elle faisoit sans aimer . . ." (467).[28] Yet this writing of the body is not the unique expression of passion to emanate from the space of desire.

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[25] Chatte Blanche advises the hero that the château where her mother satisfied her desire is "celui où nous sommes" (489).

[26] See DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, 4.

[27] Chatte Blanche's resolution of political rivalries is reminiscent of Louis XIV's divisive strategies pitting aristocrat against bourgeois as described by Norbert Elias: "Chatte Blanche ne voulut pas qu'on détruisît absolument ces pauvres infortunés. Elle avoit de la politique, & songeoit que s'il n'y avoit plus ni rats, ni souris dans le pays, ses sujets vivroient dans une oisiveté qui pourroit lui devenir préjudiciable" (482).

The château of fairy-tale writing is also the site where Chatte Blanche creates the scenario enacted by the prince which will influence the distribution of power beyond its borders. The heroine, ever solicitous of the forgetful prince's political ambitions,—"Hé bien, fils de roi, lui dit-elle, te voilà revenu sans couronne? . . . il ne faut rien négliger pour le mériter" (481)—uses her political acumen to further the hero's and her own interests. The powers of fairy-tale writing are recognized by the king, whose princely son offers him a magnificently painted cloth created by Chatte Blanche to assure the prince's ascension to the throne.[29] This marvelous cloth, whose riches elicit the king's surprised admiration, unfolds from a nutshell in a feat of enclosure which recalls Aulnoy's own embedding of her first fairy tale "L'Ile de la Félicité," in the novel *Histoire d'Hippolite, Comte de Duglas* (1690). "Chatte Blanche," whose heroine must significantly be decapitated to reassume womanly form and forsake her court for that of the prince, transforms the body of (the mother's) desire into the writing of the body, both of which in turn influence the body politic.

THE KING'S BODY

Like Chatte Blanche's mother, the prince hero of "Marcassin" *(Les Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode*, 1698) is no stranger to passion.[30] Yet, this royal protagonist in one of Aulnoy's most derisively humorous tales, does not profit from metamorphosis through the sublimation that liberated Chatte Blanche. On the contrary, for Marcassin and the entire band of Aulnoy's metamorphosed heroes, the assumption of animal form entails a distinct loss of power. In opposition to the overwhelming majority of transformed heroines whose form-shifting is a promise of empowerment, the anthropomorphic royal male is disabled and often ridiculed. One might even surmise that Aulnoy practices her own version of the "démolition du héros" as defined by Paul Benichou's study of Racinian tragedy.[31] If Perrault's assault on the aristocratic female aims indirectly at the monarch with whom he was nevertheless complicitous, Aulnoy attacks head on the body of the sovereign via metamorphosis. Replacing the misalliances that play a parallel role in the *Contes du temps passé*, Aulnoy's metamorphoses endanger the traditional family, albeit to the accompaniment of acerbic laughter.

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[28] In "Histoire de Sapho," *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*, Vol. X, Sapho's lover Phaon believes that her poetry necessarily derives from her own experience (462).

[29] See Lewis C. Seifert's "Female Empowerment and its Limits: The *Conteuses*' Active heroines," 17-37. According to Seifert, "Chatte Blanche" is "first and foremost about the power of female storytelling" (24). In his analysis of the tale's final pages, Seifert stresses the ambiguous nature of women fairy-tale writers' relation to power.

[30] *NCF*, V, 295-355.

The royal family's "tragedy" commences when the queen, another Pasiphaé, gives birth to a monster, "l'altesse Bestiole," a wild boar decked out in all the accoutrements of royalty and conversant in the ways of the *honnête homme*: "on lui ôtoit, autant qu'il étoit possible, les manières marcassines" (300); "L'on n'oublioit rien pour le rendre propre & poli" (302). Destiny, that is, the fairies who irreverently assume the same functions as the gods of classical tragedy,[32] has consigned Marcassin to the passions of the flesh, especially an insatiable appetite for marriage. Recalling Chatte Blanche's mother, who "en vouloit manger ou mourir," Marcassin "vouloit l'épouser ou mourir" (308). "Une fatalité qui m'est inconnue me force à t'épouser" (326), confesses Marcassin to the second horrified object of his affections. Although the princely boar's matrimonial bent is condoned by moralists who view marriage as "la fontaine du genre humain et le premier noeud de la société civile,"[33] Marcassin's likely progeny would be unsuitable candidates for the society they envisioned.

The prince's father, for one, fears that "la race marcassinique alloit se perpétuer dans la maison royale" (313). The queen herself, lamenting "La frénésie qui vous possède de vous marier" (332), reluctantly concedes with Pascal that "Le coeur ne consulte pas toujours la raison" (310). Traditional family values based on the ideology of lineage are mercilessly ridiculed by Aulnoy's mocking irony. Indeed, the era's ideal of the maternal body is debased through its link with deformity, while marriage and reproduction prove counter to state interests. According to François de Sales, "Le commerce nuptial" is "utile à la république."[34] However, one must surely take exception when marital "commerce" produces a race of monsters, of which the first in line is the disgraced body of the future sovereign. Both the monarchy and the state are symbolically undermined from within: the danger is inherent to absolutism itself, which is on the verge of self-destruction through its very representative, the metamorphosed body of the prospective king.

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[31] Bénichou, *Morales du grand siècle*.

[32] See Marc Fumaroli, " 'Les Fées' de Charles Perrault ou de la littérature," 166. Fumaroli explains that "fée" is the French derivative of the Latin "FATA," meaning the Fates. "Fée" is based on the same root as the old verb "fari," meaning to speak. The fairies are associated with destiny and oracle, and may be either beneficent or malefic.

[33] François de Grenaille, *L'Honneste Mariage*, 26.

Perhaps the focus on Marcassin's obsession with matrimony is little more than a decorous substitute for his enslavement to sensual appetites.[35] The prince's sexuality disorders the royal house and teasingly suggests what might transpire were the state to be ruled by a savage nature unfettered by the constraints of *bienséance*. Indeed, Aulnoy's mockingly disrespectful portrait of the future king brings to mind the numerous alternative images of Louis XIV studied by Peter Burke.[36] Hyacinthe Rigaud's heroic image of a dignified king, "Portrait of Louis XIV" (1701), was offset by less glorious works that portrayed Louis' sexual exploits and his vanity. Critics who referred to Louis XIV's "amour propre d'une grandeur immense (Burke, 139)" find a counterpart in Marcassin's queen mother, who disparages her beastly son's gullibility for flattery in the "labyrinth" of the court: "O source d'amour propre, s'écria la reine" (223). As for Louis' sexual mores, the Swiss artist Joseph Werner's "Louis and Madame de Montespan at a Feast" (1670) represents the monarch as the reigning satyr presiding at a bacchanal and flanked by scantily-clad companions (Burke, fig. 65, 147).

Aulnoy's construction of Prince Marcassin's royal body depicts a bestial nature which is derisively underscored by the luxury meant to disguise it:

> Il se fit faire des rhingraves, des canons, un pourpoint parfumé; car il avoit toujours *une petite odeur* que l'on soutenoit avec peine. Son manteau étoit brodé de pierreries, sa perruque d'un blond d'enfant, & son chapeau

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[34] *Introduction à la vie dévote*, 240.

[35] For a psychological interpretation, see Amy Vandelyn DeGraff, *The Tower and the Well*, 33-45.

[36] "The Reverse of the Medal," in *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 125-149.

> couvert de plumes. Il ne s'est peut-être jamais vu une figure plus extraordinaire que la sienne; & à moins que d'être destinée au malheur de l'épouser, personne ne pouvoit le regarder sans rire. (513-14, emphasis added)

"I heare he stincks Alive, & his Carkass will stinck more when he is dead, and so will his memory to all eternity,"[37] reported an English gentleman in reference to the fistula from which Louis XIV suffered. Marcassin's "petite odeur" suggestively links him to the Sun King while simultaneously implicating the latter in the beastly prince's dubious morality.

The hero's savagery, expressed as it is through the institution of marriage, is shown to be an integral part of the social fabric. Marcassin's first two wives are presented as sacrificial victims in ceremonies whose officiating high priestess is at the same time the impoverished noble mother of the victims. The royal house and the parents of its citizens are linked through the violence which they perpetrate on their children. Often practiced in the guise of state interests, this violence is inseparable from the desire or ambition of parental and kingly authority figures.

On the one hand, Marcassin good-naturedly disregards his fiancées' sentiments while focusing entirely on his own passion. When his first betrothed Ismène informs him, "je n'ai que de l'horreur pour vous," Marcassin insouciantly responds "Et moi, barbare . . . je n'ai que de l'amour pour toi" (313). The prince likewise approaches his second fiancée Zelonide with an identical unceremonious lack of propriety: "il entra sans façon dans sa chambre; l'ayant trouvée dans son cabinet, il l'embrassa" (325). On the other hand, the mother of both victims is described as "une femme ambitieuse qui auroit sacrifié ses filles à des avantages au dessous de celui de régner" (311).[38] Devoid of Marcassin's well-intentioned animality, this noble mother threatens her offspring with strangulation and stabbing should they disobey. Although both daughters bow to their mother's will and wed the monster prince, Ismène, "une belle victime que l'on va égorger" (313), revolts through suicide. Zelonide too protests through an abortive murder attempt on her husband, who kills her in self-defense by twice sinking his boar's teeth into her neck.

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[37] F. P. and MM. Verney, Eds. *Memoirs of the Verney Family* (London, 1904). Quoted in Burke, 169.

[38] Although Marcassin's queen mother is distraught at the prospect of her son's marrying beneath his station, she is equally concerned lest he engage in a forced marriage: "si tu épouses une femme qui ne t'aime pas, tu seras malheureux, & tu feras son supplice: si tu pouvois comprendre ce qu'on souffre dans ces unions forcées" (309). As for Marcassin's father, the king voices his disapproval, but resembles the great majority of Aulnoy's (and Perrault's) effaced patriarchs. The king remains passive when confronted with his active wife.

The unfortunate daughters are thus sacrificed to the lethal confluence of the prince's desire and the mother's ambition. To be sure, threatening parents such as this one are not absent from the era's literature, and can be linked to the dangerous parents that dominate the plays of Corneille and Racine. Perrault himself did not balk at representing the fathers of Griselidis and Peau d'Ane in a menacing light. Such "Deadly Parents" and their victimized progeny have recently been seen as an expression of the family conflicts which pervaded the age and were alluded to in aristocratic household chronicles.[39] According to Jonathan Dewald, these images of predatory parents reflect the nobility's concern for personal autonomy (violated children) at a time when patriarchal authority (violent parents) was increasing substantially. Patriarchal society created resistance even as it grew stronger. "The problem of personal autonomy," writes Dewald, "lay embedded in patriarchal ideology itself" (234). Indeed, in Aulnoy's "Le Prince Marcassin," the question of individual autonomy is embedded in that very character who represents absolutist ideology, that is, the beastly prospective sovereign.

Marcassin's savage characteristics force him to abandon the court along with his adopted personage whom he describes as "l'homme galant." Inevitably, this brand of gallantry is mockingly tainted with the "tragic" deaths of Ismène and Zelonide, for which the resigned prince assumes culpability. Overcome by guilt and grief, Marcassin retreats to a forest where he encounters his third and final wife, Marthesie, to whom he extols the virtues of free choice in affairs of the heart:

> J'ai appris depuis que je suis habitant de ces forêts, que rien au monde ne doit être plus libre que le coeur; je vois que tous les animaux sont heureux, parce qu'ils ne se contraignent point. Je ne savois pas alors leurs maximes, je les sais à présent, & je sens bien que je préférerois la mort à un hymen forcé. (336)

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[39] Jonathan Dewald, "Deadly Parents," *Culture and Identity in Modern Europe*, 223-35.

When confronted with the social precepts defining love and marriage, Marcassin argues for personal preference, for a love based on what Madeleine de Scudéry's contemporaries termed *inclination*, an intuitive affection born of genuine emotion and opposed to societal dictates. For all intents and purposes, the reformed prince favors the utopic Scudérienne ethos of *tendresse* as opposed to the lighthearted gallantry associated with the court of Louis XIV.[40] One might even link Marcassin's bestial comportment at the royal court to the reputed immorality that characterized Louis XIV's entourage prior to the moral influence of Maintenon in the 1680's. However, one cannot say that the differences distinguishing court gallantry from Marcassin's pastoral utopia are categorical. Rather, irony infuses both milieus. The royal boar, remorseful yet ever concupiscent, espouses animal maxims that comically invert some of the century's most treasured precepts.

Undercutting the romantic illusion even as it is enunciated, an unmistakable sarcasm pervades the prince's elected refuge. Marcassin emulates Molière's Alceste as he invites Marthesie to spend the remainder of her days with him in the depths of a cavern which bears a resemblance to d'Urfé's Forez. In a litany of pastoral topoï, the hero prince describes his Edenic retreat: "un ruisseau plus clair que du crystal y coule lentement: ses bords sont couverts de mousse & d'herbes fraîches; cent échos y répondent à l'envie à la voix plaintive de bergers amoureux & maltraités" (338). Marcassin's pastoral romanticism is abruptly undercut by Marthesie's eminently practical point of view: "C'est-là que nous vivrons ensemble, ou pour mieux dire, reprit-elle, c'est-là que je serai devorée par un de vos meilleurs amis" (338).

Taking her cue from Molière's Célimène—"Moi renoncer au monde avant que de veillir, / Et dans votre désert aller m'ensevelir" (V, 4; v. 1769-70)—the heroine accepts her suitor, while emphatically dismissing his chimerical illusions: "vous ne pourrez me persuader de m'ensevelir au fond d'une caverne" (339). Aristocratic romanticism, which Norbert Elias associates with *L'Astrée* and defines as the nobility's longing for an idealized past through a return to nature,[41] is clearly not the future envisioned by this heroine: "quand ils se seroient aimés autant qu'Astrée & Céladon s'aimoient, c'est tout ce qu'elle auroit pu faire que de passer ainsi ses beaux jours dans une affreuse solitude; mais qu'il s'en falloit que Marcassin fût Céladon !" (340). The text is emphatic; Céladon's romantic passivity is antipodal to Marcassin's unbridled virility. Our hero, who entraps the heroine into marriage, partakes equally of gallantry and *tendresse*, animal and human: "soyez donc ou tout un ou tout autre" (343), protests the heroine in a moment of Cartesian-inspired discomfort.

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[40] See Jean-Michel Pelous, *Amour précieux, amour galant*, 133-157. According to Pelous, the court is the center of gallantry, which is characterized by irony, mockery, and a certain immorality.

[41] *The Court Society*, 215-94. According to Elias, Céladon and the shepherds represent the middle rung of the aristocracy. They are opposed to the nymphs, who embody the court nobility, 260.

"Le Prince Marcassin" cares little for scientific rationalism: Marcassin passes from one ideology to another with the same nonchalance that he shifts from animal to human form and forsakes his retreat for the court at the tale's conclusion. Even the blood of sacrifice, which lends a certain gruesome reality to Perrault's tales, is finally recuperated when Ismène and Zelonide magically resuscitate. The fairies assure the astonished hero, who doubts that "seeing is believing," that "il est indubitable que l'on doit suspendre son jugement sur bien des choses, & penser qu'il peut entrer quelque chose de Féerie dans ce qui nous paroît de plus certain" (353). Undermining rational certainties grounded in the perspective of a subject, the fairies view the world through a prism at odds with the new discourse of scientific objectivity. Fairy-tale writing, "quelque chose de Féerie," is poised to undermine the era's new faith in rationality with a dose of magic.

In this particular instance, "quelque chose de Féerie" is synonymous with the materializing of bodies thought to have long since perished. The resuscitated bodies of the ill-fated Ismène and Zelonide disorder rational perceptions, while tampering with the notion of the "clear" and "distinct" idea: "il semble," offers Marcassin, "qu'il ne faut pas même croire ce qu'on voit" (353). This thematics of illusion and reality was, of course, endemic to the era whose epistemological concerns it expressed: the increasing sense of autonomy was had at the expense of a feeling of separation from the external world which could never be known with certainty.[42] However, when the hero and heroine recount their adventures to the "charmed" court that welcomes them, it is clear that fairy-tale logic is more persuasive than Cartesian doubt: "Tout le monde en demeura charmé, & personne ne voulut douter de la vérité d'une aventure qui paroissoit bien douteuse" (354).

Indeed, the "retour de l'autre monde," the phrase by which the narrator signals the reappearance of her sacrificed heroines, can also refer to

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[42] See Elias, 252-56.

Aulnoy's return to, or rather flirting with, a pre-Cartesian world view in which disembodied rational objectivity is not the sole measure of knowledge. Significantly, Ismène and Zelonide, together with the former's lover Coridon and the three fairies present at Marcassin's ill-fated birth, first appear in the form of six dancing distaffs laden with silk. These distaffs, three white and three black, fall dancing to the cavern floor in full view of the protagonists. At this point, a voice emanating from the direction of the distaffs asks the hero and heroine to decipher their meaning. When Marcassin responds that the three white objects signify the fairies and Marthesie replies that the three black objects represent the sisters and Coridon, the truth materializes in bodily form.

With a touch of fairy wizardry, the distaffs are transformed into the departed Isméme, Zelonide and Coridon. Recalling pre-Cartesian epistemologies, truth and knowledge are arrived at through the interpretation of an anterior text.[43] In this instance, the text was written by the fairies, who prophesied that Marcassin would thrice wed before assuming human form. "Distaff," as we know, can signify not only the spinning staff but also women's work, which is here the work of (the fairies') writing. Moreover, it is well known that the eponym "fairy" often designated salon women. In "Le Prince Marcassin" as in women's tales as a whole, the fairies (*salonnières*) spin out a tale wherein truth resides in signs, which if properly decoded, lead to knowledge: upon interpretation, the adventures of the metamorphosed body lead to the discovery of true identity.

THE BODY OF *TENDRE*

In Aulnoy's tales of metamorphosis, the king's body undergoes a series of debilitating transformations that run the gamut from Marcassin's bestial savagery to Charmant's ("L'Oiseau Bleu") and Constancio's ("Le Pigeon et la Colombe") ethereal gentility.[44] The sovereign's disgrace assumes numerous forms which can be related to the demythologized and demystified rulers discussed by Burke.[45] These symbolically dismantled sovereigns express what Burke terms a "crisis of representations," which he situates around 1690 and associates with the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns at the end of the 1680's. Given that, during the first twenty years of Louis XIV's personal reign, the monarch's glorious image was inextricably bound to cultural productions such as paintings, statues, and medals representing Louis in antique mythological garb, the debate on the relative merits of ancient and modern cultures had important political implications. The analogy between Louis XIV and Hercules was played out in numerous artistic representations of the sovereign. Citing Foucault's analysis of the classical *episteme*,[46] Burke discusses how the new rationality associated with Descartes, Galileo, Locke and Newton, weakened the reliance on analogy and correspondence upon which rested the king's image.[47] "In short," writes Burke, "kings were losing their symbolic clothes" (129). Such is the predicament of both King Charmant of "L'Oiseau Bleu" and Prince Constancio of "Le Pigeon et la Colombe."

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[43] Deneys-Tunney explains that, in Cartesian philosophy, truth is no longer arrived at through interpretation. Since there exists no anterior text to interpret, the subject becomes the foundation of knowledge. For Descartes, appearance and signs, prerogatives of the body that require interpretation, cannot reveal truth. On the other hand, the body and signs, the body as a sign system, will become one of the elements of eighteenth-century hermeneutics (41-42).

Once again, the question of autonomy is literally embedded in the patriarchal figure, whose metamorphosis is occasioned by his refusal to engage in a pre-arranged, loveless marriage. When "L'Oiseau Bleu"'s Charmant rejects the homely, ill-mannered Truitonne in preference for her prudent, modest stepsister Florine, he at once respects his *inclination*, and undergoes a humiliating transformation at the hands of Truitonne's ally, the fairy Sussio:

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[44] "L'Oiseau Bleu," *Les Contes de Fées*, I (1697). NCF, IV, 62-121. "Le Pigeon et la Colombe," *Les Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode*, III. NCF V, 91-166.

[45] Burke, 125-133.

[46] *Les Mots et les choses*, 46-77.

[47] Erica Harth's *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France*, discusses at length the older "rhetorical truth" based on analogy and resemblance, and the newer "objective truth" influenced by science and Cartesianism. See especially 68-128. See also Jean-Marie Apostolidès' discussion, in *Le Roi machine* (109) of how the king's military successes led to the abandonment of the "mythistoire" along with its feudal underpinnings. By around 1688, the discourse of antiquity is no longer the unique code used to promote the king's glorified image. Instead, representations from that time on focus on Louis XIV's military victories.

> En même temps le roi change de figure; ses bras se couvrent de plumes, & forment des aîles; ses jambes et ses piés deviennent noirs & menus; il lui croît des ongles crochus, son corps s'apetisse; il est tout garni de longues plumes fines & mêlées de bleu céleste; ses yeux s'arrondissent, & brillent comme des soleils; son nez n'est plus qu'un bec d'ivoire; il s'élève sur sa tête une aigrette blanche, qui forme une couronne, il chante à ravir, & parle de même. (78)

Aulnoy's description uses what Boileau derisively referred to as the "détail inutile" to enclose her male character within a body as confining as any assigned women in the treatises on their nature. Indeed, immediately prior to the metamorphosis, Sussio and Truitonne had captured and immobilized the hero—"ses piés s'attachèrent au parquet, comme si on les avoit cloués" (76)—a fate that parallels that of the docile housewives of Grenaille, Le Moyne and Courtin, "attachées à leur ménage."[48] Clearly, the mythical body of the bird-like king, wounded by a panoply of swords, knives, razors, and daggers attached to his preferred perch, is endangered. "Noyé dans son sang" (97-8), King Charmant's predicament is perilously close to Perrault's seven little crown-bearing ogresses, "noyées dans leur sang."

The agonizing king's powerlessness is underscored shortly after he retreats to the lair of a friendly sorcerer. There, in a reversal of Le Moyne's imagery of women's enclosure within man's and God's laws—"les loix de Dieu et les loix du Monde sont les obstacles qui l'environnent de tous costez"[49]—the unrecognizable king is voluntarily enclosed in a cage for his own protection. "The doors of the court cage were closing," reads Elias's evocation of the inescapable predicament of the nobility, who were imprisoned by the court etiquette upon which their identities depended.[50] Yet in "L'Oiseau Bleu," the king is imprisoned by the court, as represented by his mortal enemies Truitonne and her mother, who are responsible for Charmant's ordeal. A "conte du temps futur" rather than a "conte du temps passé," this fairy tale unfolds in an unspecified future in which the distinction between monarch and subject fades to such a degree that the king-to-be, metamorphosed to be sure, will speak in the interest of personal autonomy.

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[48] Courtin, 79. Similar images are found in the works of Grenaille and Le Moyne. See ch. I.

[49] Pierre Le Moyne, *La Gallerie des femmes fortes*, 149. See also ch. I.

[50] Elias, 248. Elias refers to the court "cage" on 229.

The fallen sovereign, disrespectfully named "sa majesté emplummé," is subjected to a variety of humiliations familiar to the patiently suffering male Griselidis of the *courtois* tradition. The king's "deplorable state" involves not merely a loss of status—"Tel qui veut obéir à un homme, ne veut pas obéir à un perroquet" (100)—but also a series of degrading mishaps that include a treacherous attack by Minet the cat. In what might pass for the height of indignity, L'Oiseau Bleu serves his term behind bars at the precise moment that his beloved Florine assumes power. Profiting from the death of her ineffectual father and the ensuing fall from grace of Truitonne and her rapacious mother, Florine is at last empowered. The striking contrast between the heroine's ascension and hero's decline highlights the inversion of conventional gender hierarchies at one and the same time that it hyperbolizes a persistent strain in the century's protocol of amorous behavior. For King Charmant's abasement and suffering in the name of love owes much to a venerable aristocratic tradition of amorous codes inspired by Neo-Platonic and medieval *courtois* ideals.[51] Both prominently influenced Madeleine de Scudéry's conception of *amour tendre* or *tendresse*, as well as the social theories of *honnêteté* as a whole.

The ethos of sociability that characterized *honnêteté* was founded in part on seventeenth-century versions of Neo-Platonism, which served to validate polite society by conceptualizing the social relations involved in civility as a means of attaining (group) salvation. According to the precepts of Neo-Platonism, love, inspired by beauty, is the principle of universal harmony. Consequently, love of women is associated with the desire for beauty, the latter being a sign of the divine and a proof of virtue.[52] Pelous has argued that *mondain* life was founded on a "civilization of love" (469),[53] while Stanton has emphasized the central role of love in securing the identity of the *honnête homme*: the self-respecting society gentleman might be obliged to feign amorous sentiments according to the ritualistic code of gallantry meant to confirm group cohesiveness.[54]

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[51] For another discussion of "fairy-tale love," meaning the idealized love of medieval novels modified by *précieux* conceits, see Jacques Barchilon, *Le Conte merveilleux français*, 63-76.

[52] See Lougee, *Le Paradis des femmes*, 38-39; 34-36.

[53] In his *Parallèle*, Perrault envisions gallantry as part of a universal culture, a heritage handed down from antiquity. See Pelous, 475.

[54] Stanton, 136.

Pelous distinguishes between the era's two dominant conceptions of love, *tendresse*, as formulated in the novels of Madeleine de Scudéry, and gallantry, an ironic version which flourished at the court until around 1670 (16-32). Clearly, both of these amorous codes are indebted to the *amour courtois* model. Scudéry's doctrines of *tendre* love, defined by Pelous as a "pale reflection" of Platonic love, nonetheless incorporate many *courtois* elements, among them the amorous quest together with submissive hero and dominant lady. True to Charmant's own amorous itinerary, the *tendre* hero's *inclination* is often succeeded by a metamorphic change of identity that enables him to be reborn through passion. Such is the case in Scudéry's "Histoire de Sapho" (*Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*, X). In this novel still very popular among Aulnoy's contemporaries, the heroine's lover Phaon, inspired by her poetry, succumbs to a transforming reverie that leads him to a land governed by the "Loix pour l'amour."

According to these traditions then, the ordeal occasioned by Charmant's metamorphosis is a requisite step along the arduous path to (amorous) salvation. Yet, Aulnoy's version appears to democratize the courtly ideal, since both hero and heroine alternately endure humiliation for the sake of love. Prior to the hero's change of shape, the heroine Florine, guilty of arousing Charmant's apolitical affections, is locked in a tower and psychologically abused by the representatives of the court, her stepsister Truitonne and her stepmother. In opposition to both *tendre* and gallant codes, in which the expression of love was integrally related to social interaction, the tower which clandestinely unites the lovers is limited to a "society" of two individuals totally isolated from the court. An asocial couple such as this one would have been inconceivable in Scudéry's "Histoire de Sapho," whose utopia for lovers is a hierarchical state ruled by coercive "Laws for love" that shape the expression of personal desire. In stark contrast to Scudéry's amorous utopia, whose parameters are delimited by the ideals of *honnête* theoreticians such as Méré,[55] Florine's lofty tower magically forgoes both hierarchy and the hero—"Quoi! le plus grand roi du monde! Quoi! le roi Charmant, dit la princesse, seroit le petit oiseau que je tiens?" (83)—to create an alternative version of aristocratic love, a land of Tendre perhaps, but without the "Loix pour l'amour."

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[55] Stanton's *The Aristocrat as Art* concentrates on Méré's writings as the basis for her comparison between *honnêteté* and dandyism.

Preceding his metamorphosis, the king himself rejects court gallantry when he returns Truitonne's gifts, among them a book containing "les statuts de l'ordre des chevaliers d'amour" (71). Spurning Truitonne's noble generosity, Charmant simultaneously distances himself from the sexual mores of the court, whose protocol of dissimulation is decidedly not to his taste. Clearly, the lovers Florine and Oiseau Bleu alias Charmant are incompatible with La Bruyère's duplicitous courtier who "déguise ses passions, dément son coeur, parle, agit, contre ses sentiments."[56] The harshness of Florine's two-year captivity is diminished by the lovers' trysts, which substitute genuine emotion for the court nobility's calculated display: "amour, amour, que l'on te cache difficilement! tu parois par-tout, sur les lèvres d'un amant, dans ses yeux, au son de sa voix: lorsque l'on aime, le silence, la conversation, la joie ou la tristesse, tout parle de ce qu'on ressent" (69). Diametrically opposed to the aphonic Cartesian body which "ne dit rien, n'a rien à dire, ne peut rien dire,"[57] love's body is bathed in tears, adorned in jewels and embellished by language.[58]

Taking as its model Marie de France's "Lai du Laustic," "L'Oiseau Bleu" shifts the configuration of power in the medieval tale to the effect that a jealous husband is replaced by a vicious stepmother-queen and her spiteful daughter. Nonetheless, both Aulnoy and her predecessor recount tales of love against society. Aulnoy's version of anti-social love bedecks the body in the precious jewels that the century's Neo-Platonists such as André DuChesne assimilated with corporeal beauty as signs of the virtuous soul.[59] Bestowing upon his beloved the diamonds, emeralds and rubies she reserves exclusively for their conversational rendezvous, Charmant appears to subscribe to DuChesne's apology of luxury. The enhanced beauty of Florine's ornamented body is lexically related to the lovers' discourse, "il ne s'est jamais dit tant de jolies choses" (88). The body awakens to the very language that it inspires, as the jewels, marks of affection that caress the beloved, are converted into discourse, "jolies choses."[60] Both the *tendre* injunction to silence and the *honnête* repression of demonstrative affection are abandoned by this couple whose female member is designated a "criminelle d'état."

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[56] "De la Cour," *Les Caractères*, 215.

[57] Deneys-Tunney, 58.

[58] See Stanton on the expression of passion within the code of *honnêteté* (135-39). Complaints and tears were considered to be inappropriate for the amorous *honnête homme*. See also Pelous, for a discussion of the expression of love according to the *tendre* ethos (68). The ideal of *tendre amour* paradoxically suppressed the expression of love: the man was forbidden to confess his love (although he invariably did so), while the woman was enjoined to feign indifference. However, I would add that discussions between men and women on the subject of love abound in Scudéry.

[59] Du Chesne, *Figures mystiques du riche et précieux cabinet des dames où sont représentées au vif tant de beautés, parures et pompes du corps féminin, que les perfections et atours spirituels de l'âme* (Paris: 1605). Discussed by Lougee, 39-40.

Florine's crime against the state consists in having disrupted the political marriage intended to secure Truitonne's future as King Charmant's queen. The nature of the crime is intimately related to the essence of Florine and Charmant's love, *tendre* to be sure, yet infused with a palpable sensual dimension that bespeaks individual penchant beyond social restraints, including the Scudérienne "laws for love." When Truitonne and her mother enter Florine's tower room, they discover a bejeweled heroine amidst burning incense, framed by a bed strewn with flowers. The queen then spies the cache of precious jewels hidden under Florine's bed, whereupon she accuses her step-daughter of betraying her father's kingdom to an unspecified enemy: "L'on sait vos intrigues contre l'état," she asserts menacingly (90).

What the queen conceives of as "plots against the state" involve the conflation of romantic and political realms which characterize the seventeenth-century women's novels analyzed by Joan DeJean. Women novelists, explains DeJean, wrote to "subtly contest" Louis XIV's politics of cultural assimilation. The majority of their "plots" offered alternatives to marriage, which in absolutist terms was considered the foundation of the state.[61] Far from being considered anodyne, novels by women were attacked by the likes of Boileau, poet and royal historiographer, who lamented the mixture of history and love which defined the century's historical romances.[62] Florine's conspiracy against her father's kingdom, not unlike those imagined in women's novels, involves situating love in the center of the state, while undermining arranged marriage through the imperatives of *inclination*: "Notre tendresse nous suffisoit" (93), proclaims the heroine.

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[60] As stated in ch. II, note 60, Lougee has alluded to the potential link between the Neo-Platonist Du Chesne's apology of luxury and the implicit view of women as objects of conspicuous consumption. While body ornamentation plays a prominent role in Aulnoy's tales, I would argue that the final effect underscores the sensual dimension of embellishment. In "L'Oiseau Bleu," the adorned body at once inspires and is enhanced by a kind of language. Therefore, it does not partake of the reification to which Lougee alludes, and which can be seen in certain of Perrault's tales.

Seifert, citing Lathuillère, notes that, in the early part of the century, the metaphor of the jewel was a commonplace for designating the *précieuse*. *See* "The Rhetoric of *Invraisemblance*: 'Les Enchantements de l'Eloquence'," 128. To be sure, the games popular in the Rambouillet salon could involve the metamorphosis of Julie into a diamond or Mlle. Paulet into a pearl. See Dorothy Backer, *Precious Women*, 78. Aulnoy's "L'Oiseau Bleu" departs from the pastimes of *préciosité* when she embarks on uncharted territory to explore the emotions. It is remarkable that not a single one of her heroines is transformed, like Perrault's Cinderella, into a refined jewel.

[61] DeJean, 1-16.

In the eyes of the queen, or the State which authorizes her tyrannical authority, Florine's crime is to have appropriated court ritual for private and erotic purposes: "Et pour qui donc, reprit la reine, êtes-vous coëffée comme une petite coquette, votre chambre pleine d'odeurs, & votre personne si magnifique, qu'au milieu de la cour vous seriez moins parée?" (91). And although Florine's private utopia is said to foster "La passion la plus pure & la plus tendre qui sera jamais," this "pure" love boasts a fledgling eroticism, together with a hint of the tearful sensitivity which will mark certain novels and plays of the following century. To be sure, the humor elicited by Charmant's metamorphosed state, which forces him to punctuate his words of love with gentle pecks rather than caresses, provides the necessary cover to experiment with the strictures of *bienséance*.[63]

After regaining his human shape, King Charmant returns with Florine to a court which resembles the one abandoned by the Princess of Clèves: "la galanterie & la magnificence y parurent également" (120). Although this reintegration into the kingdom articulates the typical fairy-tale closure so often noted by critics, it is given a different twist in "Le Pigeon et la Colombe." Explicitly linking this later tale to "L'Oiseau Bleu," the newly metamorphosed prince Constancio cites his predecessor: "Me voilà pigeon:

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[62] "Chant III," *L'Art Poétique*, 169-179; *Dialogue des héros de roman*, 447-489.

[63] For a discussion of the interrelationship of metamorphosis and the expression of sexuality in the tales of Aulnoy, La Force, and Mailly, see Seifert, *FTSG*, 118-129. Seifert's analysis of Aulnoy's "Oranger et l'abeille," not studied in this chapter, is most pertinent (122-25). As Seifert argues, "by means of metamorphosis, 'tenderness' takes the most physical of forms . . . " (123).

Raymonde Robert describes the link between sexuality and metamorphosis as "ce jeu pervers avec une sexualité dévoyée." "Or l'époque qui m'occupe est une période dans laquelle on va développer insensiblement un type d'écriture qu'on peut dire pervers. Tout en respectant dans la forme les interdits moraux, tout en décrivant, en apparence, une sexualité sublimée par les canons de l'amour courtois et de la préciosité, un jeu érotique se dessine repérable dès ses premières manifestations" *Le Conte de fées littéraire en France*, 135. See also 134-38.

encore si je pouvois parler, comme autrefois l'oiseau Bleu (dont j'ai toute ma vie aimé le conte)" (152). This is merely one of two references by which Aulnoy signs her tale wherein both hero and heroine elect the metamorphosed forms of their isolated desert realm over the "grandeurs de la terre." "Le Pigeon et la Colombe," replete with cruel authoritarian queen and star-crossed lovers, elaborates on two themes previously sketched out in "L'Oiseau Bleu": personal expression and the eroticism from which it is inseparable.

As in "Le Prince Marcassin," tragedy engulfs the royal family when Constancia's parents perish at the tale's outset. In a turn of poetic justice which reverses the figure of the dominant hunter-princes in "Griselidis" and "La Belle au bois dormant," the kingly father is catapulted to his death by his own horses while hunting. After the Queen dies of grief, the orphaned heroine is raised by the Fairy Souveraine, a philosopher-stateswoman, lawmaker and seer. This elision of family in favor of a powerful female suggests the feminocentric salon's own function as a refuge from family and court ties. Because of women's subjection to passion, wrote Richelieu, their actions are not grounded in reason and justice; "ce seul Principe les exclue de toutes Administrations publiques."[64] However, Souveraine, who is an intimate friend of Cupid—"nous sommes unis ensemble," he says of their relationship (151)—governs so judiciously that the Greek wise men themselves would be unable to surpass her accomplishments.

Moreover, Souveraine deciphers the message of the oracular stars in the same manner that others interpret fairy tales: "La fée lisoit dans les astres avec la même facilité qu'on lit à présent les contes nouveaux qui s'impriment tous les jours" (93). "Contes nouveaux," the elliptical title of *Les Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode*, is the very volume that includes "Le Pigeon et la Colombe." This teasing self-reference complements the hero's citation of "L'Oiseau Bleu" and typifies the interior signature found in numerous Aulnoy tales, including the previously analyzed "Chatte Blanche." Just as Souveraine interrogates the heavens to divine Constancia's fate, so too should the reader examine fairy tales to discover the message that they conceal: both the stars and the tales enjoy oracular status. To seek out what this fairy tale reveals, one need follow the heroine to a Forez-like country where Princess Constancia, fleeing an amorous giant's marital designs, must remain disguised as a shepherdess until her sixteenth year.

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[64] Richelieu, 13.

In the course of her exile, the heroine encounters Prince Constancio, whose name homophonically suggests the union of hearts implicit in the Neo-Platonic tradition which the tale often espouses. The soul mates are forbidden to love by Constancio's queen mother, "la plus cruelle et vindicative princesse du monde" (130). Fearing her son's misalliance with a shepherdess, the queen thrice attempts to eliminate Constancia. The prince, who must soon depart to marry his cousin as commanded by the queen, seeks out Constancia to say farewell and promise a swift return. He discovers the heroine in a grotto, then spies on her longingly as she unbraids her hair beside a stream in which she bathes her feet. The heroine gradually falls peacefully asleep, but the hero continues to gaze upon her with pleasure as he dreamily reflects on the progress of their love:

> il la regarda quelque tems avec un plaisir qui suspendit ses ennuis; ensuite parcourant ses beautés, il apperçut son pied plus blanc que la neige: il ne se lassoit pas de l'admirer, & s'approchant, il se mit à genoux & lui prit la main; aussi-tôt elle s'éveilla, elle parut fâchée de ce qu'il avoit vu son pied, elle le cacha, en rougissant comme une rose vermeille qui s'épanouit au lever de l'aurore. (132)

An amorous conversation, punctuated by the couple's weeping, ensues. Finally, Constancio's confidant arrives at nightfall to find the hero still kneeling with his beloved's hand in his own. In this sexual collage the only consummation is poetic, in the guise of the tears shed by the enraptured lovers. However, the eroticism of this passage, which involves a disrobing of the body, from the unbinding of the hair to the baring of the foot, cannot be denied.

This intimate scene is not without parallels to the episode in "Chatte Blanche" that represents the mother's liberation from repression. At the touch of the fairy's wand, the mother feels as if a heavy rigid dress had been lifted from her oppressed body. Unlike Chatte Blanche's mother, Constancia requires no magic wand because her royalty, and the repression attendant upon it, is already dissimulated under the shepherdess' casual attire. Disguise thus enables the introduction of another liberating element, the lover's gaze which draws the beloved ever closer to the vulnerability associated with genuine emotion and self-revelation. While one must concede that the beloved's body between head and foot is rendered in the abstractions typical of the era's novelistic expression, Aulnoy's focusing on free-flowing hair and shoeless feet invite the reader to imagine the missing details. The two lovers are situated in an eminently private domain far from the ostentatious love which played such a vital role in the theories of *honnêteté*. Opposed to the tyranny of group pressure, the highly personal nature of eroticism places Aulnoy's couple in a private space of self-revelation, which Elizabeth Goldsmith has identified with the end-of-the-century shift from the cult of sociability to one of sincerity. According to Goldsmith's study of conduct and epistolary manuals, a "rhetoric of self revelation" gradually replaced that of civility as the century progressed. Indeed, *honnêteté* views as disruptive any incursion of the personal within the dynamics of group interaction.[65]

Unlike its sister tale "L'Oiseau Bleu," whose protagonists are finally reintegrated into the formerly despised court, the closure of "Le Pigeon et la Colombe" reinstates and reinforces the private domain depicted in the grotto scene. Inaccessible by route of the new rationality, this personal realm is to be attained only through a magic potion whose very ingredients foretell the couple's eventual metamorphoses. At one point in this amorous chronicle, the heroine, another Astrée, feigns indifference to the hero, who in consequence falls dangerously ill. Seeking to heal the prince all the while regretting her ignorance—"j'ai fait un mensonge lorsque je me suis vantée d'avoir quelque science" (120)—Constancia concocts a remedy, an amalgam of dove feathers and pigeon blood. The hero recovers to the astonishment of his doctors, who attribute this miracle to the beauty of the healer: the men of science "dirent en leur jargon qu'un de ces regards étoit plus puissant que toute la pharmacie ensemble" (122). Science then, cannot compete with magic: the rational objectivity promoted by the official Académie des Sciences is reduced to "jargon" and superseded by the marvel of compassionate empathy.[66] Fantasy, not science, will unsettle the traditions of civility by suggesting the notion of the private self. Offering an alternative to the *corps machine*, Aulnoy invents the fabulous metamorphosed body, conversant in the alchemy of passion. Only by the precipitous route of *inclination*, transformed beyond the measure of reason, can one reach the desert solitude of "pure" and "virtuous" love elected by the protagonists at the tale's conclusion.

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[65] Goldsmith, *Exclusive Conversations: The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France*, 13; 37. Goldsmith interprets the writing of love letters as one indication of the shift from sociability to sincerity. According to Goldsmith, love letters articulate an "esthetic of excess," a loss of control antipodal to the normative codes that governed polite society. The protagonists of "Le Pigeon et la Colombe" do engage in letter writing. At one point in the tale, Constancia retires to her room to dream pleasurably about her love while responding to her lover's letters (142).

Eroticism plays a significant role in the tales of La Force. See Welch, "L'Eros féminin dans les contes de fées de Mlle. de la Force."

True to his royal predecessors Marcassin and Charmant, Constancio undergoes the rigors of metamorphosis which, in the redemptive *courtois* tradition, is initially experienced as the "comble de tous les malheurs" (151). At the very moment that he sets out to rescue the heroine, the unfortunate hero is transformed into a lowly pigeon, then entrapped in a child's basket. Yet, like the predicament of his demythified companions Marcassin and Charmant, Constancio's imprisonment in animal form, linked as it is to the question of personal autonomy, is potentially liberating. In an explicit reference to Neo-Platonic strains in the aristocratic amatory tradition, Constancio is metamorphosed at the hands of Cupid; the seeds of private expression are embedded in the *amorous* patriarchal figure.

Perhaps emulating Marie-Catherine de Villedieu's popular novel *Les Désordres de l'amour* (1675), which underscores the democratizing effects of amorous relations, Aulnoy highlights the egalitarian consequences of reciprocal, intuitive attraction. Clearly, the democratic implications of the love theme omnipresent in Aulnoy's tales of royal personages suggest a potentially subversive thematics as opposed to an innocuous commonplace. In this particular tale, Prince Constancio's metamorphosis by Cupid leads to the notion of individual autonomy, graphically enhanced by a desert solitude on the outskirts of society. It is to this isolated realm that one must retreat in order to divine the fairy tale's "oracular" message.

According to Grenaille's *Les Plaisirs des dames*, certain persons take leave of civilized society in order to engage in sinful pursuits with greater impunity: "Elles vont reprendre dedans les bois les vices que les hommes quittèrent quand ils furent appellez à la société civile" (218). As we have seen, theoreticians of *honnêteté* and *amour tendre* such as Madeleine de

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[66] Erica Harth's *Cartesian Women* espoused only partially the new objective science promoted by the official academies from which they were excluded. According to Harth, their "feminist alternative" denies the split between humanity and the natural world and prefers instead a conciliation between the older discourse based on metaphor and analogy, and the new scientific rationalism.

Scudéry, promoted the ideal of an eminently social love. In this tale as in numerous others, Aulnoy departs from this aristocratic tradition upon which the court society was in part founded. Rejecting society while embracing their metamorphosed states, Constancia and her masculine namesake emulate the moralizing philosopher-fairy Souveraine:

> debarassés du soin de nos royaumes, n'ayant ni conseil à faire, ni audiences à donner, exempts de jouer sans cesse un rôle importun sur le grand théâtre du monde, il nous sera plus aisé de vivre l'un pour l'autre dans cette aimable solitude (163-64).

This "belle solitude," "le plus beau désert de la nature," spurns the code of *honnête* civility along with the amorous feints typical of the aristocratic romanticism prevalent in d'Urfé's *L'Astrée.*

Only sincerity, the protagonists tirelessly reiterate, can delimit the confines of their "kingdom of the deserts." It is here that the "tendres époux," an oxymoron that testifies to "the profound uncertainty in the amorous sensibility of the times,"[67] will enact an alternative (aristocratic?) discourse on love. This discourse can perhaps be associated with the new emphasis on sincerity which dates from approximately 1669, the year of the publication of the *Lettres portugaises*. And yet, Aulnoy does not appear to subscribe to the pessimism associated with the ethics of sincerity in such novels as Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) and Bernard's *Les Malheurs de l'amour* (1687). To be sure, a degree of pessimism can be detected in the unstated thesis that lovers can fulfill their desires only in metamorphosed form. However, cynicism is clearly subordinated to the very notion of the private self and its expression.

"Ne ménagez point la réputation de votre esprit aux dépens de votre coeur" (63), the hero advises Constancia. The latter acquiesces to her lover's proposal of anti-social love by agreeing to abandon the "great theater of the world." Implicitly recognizing and explicitly rejecting the role-playing involved in social identity, the hero and heroine prefer private as opposed to social contracts. Shape-shifting becomes a metaphor for psychological transformation, while the metamorphosed body becomes a theater for experimenting with alternative identities.

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[67] I quote Pelous, 142. "Tendres époux" is oxymoronic because marriage is inimical to both *tendre* and gallant versions of the aristocratic code. One could of course argue that this is a "marriage" to the *tendre* conception of love. However, it should be noted that what is described as the *tendre* love between Marcassin and Marthésie does not preclude the latter's becoming pregnant during her stay in the king's cavern.

That the era's nobility too was restless for change is demonstrated by their enthusiasm for masked balls in the latter part of the century. Dewald, for one, has suggested that the nobility responded to the increasing restraints imposed on them by experimenting with the anonymity provided in societal games such as the masquerade and gambling. Rebelling against the necessity of social conformity through ludic behavior such as the masked ball, leisured aristocrats took liberties with entrenched notions of hierarchy and social distinction.[68] In *Les Plaisirs des dames*, Grenaille does indeed associate metamorphosis with the balls he marks out as women's domain: "elles se font méconnaistre . . . pour nous faire croire qu'elles changent de nature" (333).

Both shape-shifting and masquerade elide questions of rank, yet Aulnoy's version of metamorphosis changes forms in the interest of developing genuine sentiment while exploring rudimentary modes of psychological analysis. The treatises on elegant manners underlying the aristocratic "civilization of love" implied that the self could be created, that it was, as Stanton has shown, a work of art. For the higher sake of group solidarity, one was to eliminate personal idiosyncrasy by fashioning one's outer appearance to the contrived measure of a code regulating dress, conversation, even writing. A victory of culture over nature, the invented self was yet another proof of noble superiority. It is paradoxical, then, that this set of prescriptions devised to facilitate social interaction, paved the way for a reflection on the problems of individual autonomy and personal expression. Furthermore, if the ideology of the salon replaced birth by *esprit*[69] while asserting the transforming powers of the *honnête* code, then perhaps Constancio's warning—"Ne ménagez point la réputation de votre esprit aux dépens de votre coeur"—indicates the existence of a counter code that prefers the meandering of sentimental expression to the deliberateness of prescribed behavior.

The paradoxes inherent in the precepts of civility appear to be at one with the contradictions inherent in the very notion of aristocratic identity as set forth by Dewald. On the one hand, the monarchical court upheld the traditional ideals of lineage, family and religion. On the other hand, the rules of civility, drawn up in part by nobles antagonistic to the court, yet practiced in both court and salon, involved a certain denial of past tradition, while suggesting the notion of a self-in-process.[70] The ideological conflicts that divided the court society from within are textualized in the two diametrically opposed endings of "L'Oiseau Bleu" and "Le Pigeon et la Colombe." Courtly ideology is espoused in the former tale when hero and heroine affirm dynastic ideals by embracing "la magnificence et la galanterie" of the court. On the contrary, the seeds of personal autonomy implicit in the theories of civility construct the "belle solitude" preferred by the latter's protagonists.

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[68] Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*, 9; 167.

[69] See Lougee, 52.

THE PERIPATETIC BODY

According to Timmermans, "Dans la belle société, il ne saurait être question d'enfermer la femme dans son ménage."[71] Many were the defenders of the female sex, including Poullain and Du Bosc, for whom women's identity was not limited to household tasks and marriage. If not all feminists emulated Du Bosc in asserting the general incompatibility between domestic chores and *honnêteté*, most reconciled the household role with extra-domestic functions.[72] Destined for the same cultivated audience who read fairy tales, the numerous defenses of the female sex and the catalogues of accomplished women or *femmes fortes* were very popular with women of the elite. A significant number of them frequented both court and salon, where the gallant and *précieux* irreverent attitudes toward marriage were in contradiction with the increasing patriarchal authority encouraged by absolutism. Indeed, women's fairy tales may be considered an extension of the pro-woman literature examined by Maclean and Timmermans. Seeming to emulate the *femmes fortes* created by men during the reign of Anne of Austria, fairy-tale heroines are often distinguished by their exceptional qualities which enable them to participate in valorous quests, war, and government.[73]

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[70] Dewald, *AE*, 127-145.

[71] Timmermans, 362.

[72] See Lougee, 11-23, and Timmermans, 290-318. See also ch. I.

[73] See Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, 64-87. According to Maclean, the *femmes fortes* created by male writers make no attempt to change women's status in society. On the contrary, the exceptional qualities of the *femme forte* are seen to contrast with the

The majority of the *conteuses*' heroines, unfettered by what De Pure's *précieuses* saw as the "shackles" of marriage, children, and household obligations, would surely prefer a chivalric adventure to a charitable hospital or prison visit. Such are Aulnoy's peripatetic heroines, who, perhaps inspired by Rambouillet games such as the *jeu de la métamorphose*, travel from salon to forest, human to animal, in an exploration of identities that in large part elides both marriage and family. Indeed, both the accelerated pace and the sheer quantity of adventures overwhelms the tacked-on conventional marriage ending. As we have seen, Aulnoy's metamorphosis tales, like Perrault's tales of misalliance, pose a major threat to the integrity of family bloodlines. A change of form forces both the eponymous heroine of "Babiole" (*Les Contes de Fées*, IV, 1698) and "Serpentin Vert"'s Laidronette (*Les Contes de Fées*, IV, 1698)[74] to abandon the patriarchal house and pursue the adventures enabled by their transformed states. Metamorphosis, the change from within expressive of personal resistance, is orchestrated by the fairies, the doubles of "Mesdames les fées," the storytelling *conteuses*.

When Babiole's mother questions maternity—"une fille me . . . coûtera bien des larmes & bien des soupirs: ne serois-je donc plus heureuse de n'en point avoir?" (52)—she at once brings to mind the desiring mother of "Chatte Blanche" and presages her soon-to-be metamorphosed daughter's exit from the family in the form of a *guenon.* Since the latter can signify both a female monkey and an ugly woman, a more humiliating transformation could surely not befall a princess. One cannot deny the comic resonance of this transformation in which the speaking and reasoning monkey-cum-princess is adorned in velvet brocade and made to display her intelligence before royal audiences. Yet, Babiole, who protests forced marriage, loves liberty and abhors servitude, adopts a tone befitting the characters in Michel De Pure's contemporary novel *La Prétieuse* (1655). Accusing her aunt and adoptive mother of sacrificing her to a monster in the interests of political expediency, the heroine makes her own plea for personal choice by fleeing the detested suitor in a manner proper to her transformed state: "Elle se hâta donc de partir, sautant d'arbre en arbre, de branche en branche" (67). This flight enabled by metamorphosis is a consequence of the same logic espoused by De Pure's précieuse Thanatime:

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attributes of the majority of women.

[74] "Serpentin Vert," *NCF*, IV, 163-213; "Babiole," *NCF*, IV, 51-94.

"Aymer par ordre, choisir par règle, tenir par force, ne firent jamais un bon effet dans une âme délicate."[75]

True to Aulnoy's band of metamorphosed heroines, Babiole retains human intelligence and sensitivity, De Pure's "âme délicate," the sine qua non condition of privacy and freedom from unacceptable social dicta. Forced into perpetual motion by her quest for liberty—"elle alla tant & tant" (77)—Babiole's dizzying odyssey navigates around the "prisons" of marriage, family, and fairies' curses, which she escapes by fleeing into both desert and forest. "Je suis lasse d'être prisonnière" (90), laments the heroine, who "aimoit mieux s'exiler volontairement & demeurer maîtresse de sa liberté que de la perdre pour jamais" (77). The heroine's antipathy for confinement within what Le Moyne so aptly represented as "les loix de Dieu et les loix du Monde," is eloquently expressed as the conflict between body and mind, animal and human. The ultimate prison for Babiole consists of her exile in a body that is manifestly inferior:

> que puis-je ressentir lorsque je me vois dans mon miroir, petite, laide & noire, ayant des pâtes couvertes de poil, avec une queue & des dents toujours prêtes à mordre, & que d'ailleurs je ne manque point d'esprit, que j'ai du goût, de la délicatesse & des sentiments? (74)

Representing femininity at the summit of disgrace, Babiole's body derives from the moralists, even though the beauty that certain among them associated with the "objet précieux" is here transformed into its antithesis. For the body's repulsiveness reflected in this mirror signifies not so much its corporeal flaws as its eminent visibility, one so dominant as to obscure the soul or intelligence that animates it. The interrogation of identity implicit in this passage is situated in an imprecise zone where evolving and oft-times contradictory influences converge. The theoreticians' association of women with the body, Descartes' positing of the asexual universal subject, *honnêteté*'s designation of women as arbiters of taste and intermediaries for the propagation of civilization and culture, all these intersecting threads play a part in constructing the unsightly image that Babiole assumes as her own. The deformed princess appears to have interiorized Fénelon's lessons only too well: "Pour son corps, tout la porte à le flatter, à l'orner, et à s'en faire une idole: il est capital de lui en inspirer le mépris."[76]

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[75] *La Prétieuse*, III, 20.

[76] Fénelon, 126.

However, Fénelon's disparagement of sensuality, meant to revitalize the aristocracy by emphasizing family values while simultaneously attacking women's social prominence, affects the heroine in a way that he had not predicted. Contrary to Fénelon's purposes, Babiole's disdained body distances her from the very aristocratic family traditions that he sought to reaffirm. Although the heroine at long last recovers both her beauty and the cousin-prince who formerly scorned her, the greater part of her story involves the quest for personal freedom together with the validation of her "délicatesse & . . . sentiments." Enacting what De Pure's Thantamine described as "Ce mouvement de coeur qui approuve, qui agrée, qui se satisfait, n'a point de cause externe ny de principe hors de soy-mesme" (III, 20), Babiole's odyssey is an eminently self-assertive one.

This unattractiveness in contradistinction to the century's notions of women's identity—"L'air spirituel est dans les hommes ce que la regularité des traits est dans les femmes"[77]—reappears in "Serpentin Vert," and forces the aptly-named Laidronette out of the family and into the "Château des Solitaires." Enjoying the "agréable solitude" of her Jansenist-inspired retreat, the heroine employs her time wisely to write "quelques livres de réflexion" (167). Laidronette's metamorphosis and subsequent flight into solitude suggestively link her to the illustrious *Solitaires* whose ranks included Arnauld, Nicole, and Pascal, heretics all in the eyes of absolutism. Notwithstanding a certain superficial resemblance, Port Royal's reputation as a bastion of resistance to authority and an asylum for private thought lends a subversive dimension to the "Château des Solitaires" which serves as Laidronette's refuge.[78]

Aulnoy's contemporaries did indeed associate Jansenism with the *précieuses*, whose reputation for learning and writing set them apart from the rest of society. Moreover, certain prominent salon women such as Mme. de Sablé, embraced Jansenism and kept abreast of its controversies.[79] Aulnoy's Laidronette, whom the evil fairy Magotine accuses of being a "raisonneuse" and "un docteur d'une nouvelle édition" (191), surely qualifies for the title of *femme savante*, the largely derogatory epithet assigned the *précieuses* after 1660.[80] Those contemporaries who seemingly praise learned women, often temper their enthusiasm with sobering anecdotes. A case in point is Marville Vigneul, alias Bonaventure d'Argonne, whose laudatory portrait of the erudite Mlle. de la Vigne might easily dissuade women from arduous study: "Les études de Mademoiselle de la Vigne lui causèrent la pierre, qui servant de contrepoids aux attraits qu'elle auroit pû avoir pour le monde, l'enleva au Ciel encore assez jeune."[81] Challenging the preconceived ideas of female identity has dire consequences indeed.

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[77] La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*, 32; 355. See also preceding chapters.

[78] For a brief history of seventeenth-century Jansenism, see Louis Cognet, *Le Jansénisme*. On the *Solitaires*, see 124-25.

[79] See Backer, 223-36.

[80] See Timmermans, 123-24.

Nonetheless, Aulnoy pays little heed to the reigning prejudice on women's education. In opposition to the majority of her contemporaries including most women's advocates, she invents a heroine whose knowledge is neither defined nor confined to the place she occupies in elite society circles.[82] Largely disregarding the Post-Fronde hostility toward erudite women, Laidronette undertakes an intellectual apprenticeship that might be perceived as a challenge to the increasing conformity demanded by absolutism.[83] Clearly, the Laidronette of the "Château des Solitaires" flouts Fénelon's injunction ordaining a feminine "pudeur sur la science."[84] Abandoning family while embracing scholarly pursuits, the unsightly heroine will learn to adopt another persona. Her forced exit from the family via metamorphosis links her to De Pure's *précieuse*, who "n'est point la fille de son père ny de sa mère." Rejected by her family, Laidronette fashions her own identity, and in so doing emulates the *précieuse* who "se forme dans la Ruelle."[85] However, the solitude and reflection responsible for Laidronette's alternative persona is antithetical to that of the socially formed *salonnière*. Indeed, the anti-social nature of her transformation into a female philosopher is underscored by the taunting and evil Magotine.

Swiftly descending from the heights of philosophy, the heroine is forced to perform the onerous domestic tasks assigned her by the fairy Magotine. The "prison" of domesticity so often evoked in the previously examined literature on women, becomes the lot of the transformed princess. Placed in a grotto closed off by a mammoth rock, made to don iron shoes and ordered to spin a spider-like cloth into fine silk thread, Laidronette is cruelly rebuked for her intellectual enterprises. Yet, with the aid of her ally, the protective fairy, the heroine prevails and successfully accomplishes this and yet another impossible task. When the dismayed Magotine reappears, the imprudent heroine protests her persecution and is in consequence taunted anew by the evil fairy—"vous raisonnez beaucoup" (193). Then, further burdened by a millstone encircling her neck, she struggles to ascend a mountain in order to gather water in a pierced jug.

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[81] *Mélanges d'histoire et de littérature* (1699) 73-74.

[82] See Lougee, 27.

[83] See Timmermans, 351-52.

[84] Fénelon, 131. See also ch. I.

[85] De Pure, I: 63.

The aggressive dimension involved in domestic oppression cannot be more forcefully rendered. Symbolizing the futility of the never accomplished, always renewed household task, the iron shoes, millstone and pierced jug recreate the domestic "prisons" imagined by the century's prescriptive literature on women. Aulnoy's response to her era's new interest in the values of domestic life might have been directed to Fénelon, who, as we will remember, had a quite restrictive view of housewifery: "qu'elles remarquent le moindre désordre dans la maison, tenir chaque chose en sa place."[86] Fénelon, Perrault, Aulnoy, all were obsessed by the problem of women's place. Perrault and especially Aulnoy show a persistent concern with their heroines' mobility or the lack thereof. For both authors, the impediments to freedom are variously figured as glass slippers (Perrault) or iron shoes (Aulnoy), yet the unprecedented fixation on movement can be seen to underscore contemporaries' concern with women's proper role in an evolving society.

Encouraging her reader to reflect on Laidronette's own place in the literary landscape, Aulnoy introduces the Cupid and Psyche myth, while implying that it is unworthy of her heroine's emulation. Jacques Barchilon, who has studied the evolution of this legend from myth to fairy tale, notes that, in contrast to Aulnoy's "Le Prince Marcassin," modeled directly on the 1550 Straparole version, "Serpentin Vert" deliberately unsettles the reader's expectations.[87] In the tale as in the myth, the heroine, driven by her curiosity, disobeys her husband's injunction to refrain from gazing upon him. However, in "Serpentin Vert," the disobedient heroine discovers a vile serpent in lieu of the handsome youth in Apuleius' legend. After marrying an invisible voice who offers her the story of Cupid and Psyche, Laidronette studies the myth with the intention of heeding her mate's warning to avoid Psyche's example. Yet, despite her resolution, she eventually succumbs to her curiosity upon being cajoled by her family.

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[86] Fénelon, 156. See also ch. I.

[87] *Le Conte merveilleux français*, 1-12.

Referring to the tale recounted by Laidronette's invisible husband to explain the terms of his metamorphosis, the family marvels at the heroine's credulity: "est-il possible que tu croies . . . de tels contes?" (188). When Laidronette yields to family pressure by spying on her sleeping husband by the light of a lamp, she espouses the literary tradition that she simultaneously reenacts. On the other hand, she rejects the fairy tale—"de tels contes"—proposed by "Mesdames les fées" in the guise of her husband. To be sure, the old literary model, informed by misogynist commonplaces against women's curiosity, occasions the heroine's suffering at the hands of Magotine. After all, tradition urges that curiosity, a necessary component of the quest for knowledge, be punished when it manifests itself in an "inferior" female mind.

"L'exemple de Psiché ne peut la rendre sage," (213) warns the obligatory concluding moral. Surely not, since in this fairy tale, Aulnoy sets forth her own, modern rendition of the myth to compensate for the inadequacies of the old version so detrimental to the heroine's welfare. The ancient myth literally explodes in a startling vision of bestial horror that will clear the terrain for a modern fantasy. Playing on her reader's expectations by substituting a hideous serpent for the legendary handsome lover, Aulnoy highlights her own role as a modern writer in the "petite république" of fairy-tale writing. Embedded in the story itself via a *mise en abyme*, this domain of invention celebrates the writer's craft.

After Laidronette is rescued from Magotine's persecution by the protective fairy, the latter stipulates that the heroine need remain three years in the mountain forest before being reunited with her husband. In this verdant retreat, Laidronette recovers her beauty and reigns over a "petite république" replete with speaking and reasoning animals. Metamorphosed creatures all, they must serve their respective terms before reassuming human form. In response to the newly-christened "Discrète"'s Racinian "Où suis-je" so characteristic of Aulnoy's restive heroines, these rare species explain that the fairies have transformed them into animals corresponding to their moral weaknesses.[88] Here in the wooded mountains, metamorphosed storytellers of all rank and temperament offer to recount their transformational adventures to Discrète. Lions dance with lambs, bears court doves, and butterflies cavort with panthers: "Enfin, rien n'étoit assorti selon son espèce" (206).

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[88] Aulnoy adopts the same strategy as La Fontaine to moralize on human foibles.

Hierarchy is dissolved in this "petite république" situated on the outskirts of the familial "petite république" extolled by countless male writers of the period. According to Richelet, the term "république" can signify "la république des lettres" as well as a person "Qui n'aime point l'état monarchique." Aulnoy's republic of letters does indeed seem antithetical to the one organized by Louis XIV and his literary theoreticians such as La Mesnardière. It is well known that the latter's influential dramatic theories, including his conception of verisimilitude expounded in the 1639 *Poétique,* conceived of decorum as eminently hierarchical and essential for social stability.

Since he believed that their disruption would have negative consequences on social order, La Mesnardière classified theatrically representable identities according to a strict code of class and gender differences: "Pour la Propriété des Moeurs, le Poëte doit considérer qu'il ne faut jamais introduire sans nécessité absolüe, ni une Fille vaillante, ni une Femme sçavante, ni un Valet judicieux."[89] Given that fairy-tales and the novels associated with them were excluded from the officially recognized genres of the era, they largely escaped criticism by dint of their supposed inferiority. Nevertheless, La Mesnardière, whose sanctioned female characters included "les Femmes douces et modestes, les Filles pleines de pudeur," could have scarcely condoned the likes of Laidronette, whose apprenticeship in the "Château des Solitaires" exceeds the limits of femininity as he defined it. Clearly, La Mesnardière's emphasis on *pudeur* and modesty links his poetics to the previously examined tracts on the nature of women.

The hierarchy-defying "petite république" of fairy-tale writing, in which "rien n'étoit assorti selon son espèce," resembles what Somaize described as the "république" of the *précieuses*. Indeed, Somaize asserts that the salon women designated as *précieuses*, "ont voulu mesler d'elles mêmes d'escrire."[90] Mademoiselle de Montpensier herself defined the *précieux* realm as "une sorte de république,"[91] and Chapelain ridiculed the learned Vicomtesse d'Auchy's salon as an "academy of aging fairies."[92] Citing these and other contemporaneous references, modern literary criticism generally acknowledges the link between fairy-tale writing, the salons, and *préciosité*. Timmermans, for one, referring to Mary E. Storer's discovery of the network of friendships uniting the *conteuses*, has defined their association as a "prolongation of *préciosité*."[93] However, Aulnoy's latter-day *préciosité*, if it may be described as such, must be qualified. Although Aulnoy's work does not necessarily negate the sisterhood of writing implied in the expression "Mesdames les Fées," it nonetheless includes a marked taste for solitude not previously identified with the socially conscious Madeleine de Scudérys of the earlier part of the century. Clearly, the literature which emanated from the seventeenth-century salons has a wider range and depth than is commonly presumed.

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[89] Lyons, 6-7 and note 14, above. The following two quotations from La Mesnardière's *Poétique* are from Lyons, 6-7.

[90] Antoine de Somaize, *Dictionnaire des précieuses*, XXXIX; I, 9.

[91] Mlle. de Montpensier, "Portrait des Précieuses," cited in Georges Mongrédien *Les Précieux et les précieuses*, 200.

[92] Jean Chapelain, *Lettres* I, 221-22. Ed. Tamizey de Larrouge. Chapelain is quoted by Wendy Gibson, *Women in Seventeenth-Century France*, 179.

The salon's reputation as a crossroads for social mobility where non-nobles learned aristocratic values and manners is suggested by the transitory identities that inhabit Discrète's "petite république." A most ephemeral kingdom, the "small republic"'s very existence is undermined from within by creatures in a state of perpetual transformation.[94] This phantasmic state imagined by Aulnoy serves as a forum for interrogating the nature of the self, a provisional construct subject to transient metamorphoses. This small republic of fairy-tale writing, and perhaps certain salons of the end of the century, stands opposed to Louis XIV's republic of letters as embodied in the theories of the academicians. Moreover, if one can envision women's fairy tales as a fictional prolongation of salon space, the latter's conservative function, recently highlighted by scholars including Lougee, Harth, and Timmermans, was surely not incompatible with innovative tendencies. For although the salon propagated aristocratic values, exercised limited dissent in comparison with male academies, and contributed to realizing the goals of absolutism, it also produced women who wrote stories often at odds with the established order. Aulnoy's tales of metamorphosis give evidence that salon literature could engage in such innovative practices as the exploration of selfhood and the experimentation with new forms of personal expression.[95]

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[93] Mary E. Storer, *La Mode des contes de Fées*, 256. Timmermans, 219.

[94] Aulnoy at times amplifies the unstable identities of her metamorphosed characters by moving them to and fro between human and animal natures according to a diurnal-nocturnal chronology. As an illustration, Marcassin is a boar by day and a man at night, while Serpentin Vert is a serpent by day and a man at night. In "La Biche au bois," to be analyzed in the following chapter, the heroine is a doe by day and a woman at nightfall.

DISEMBODIED ILLUSIONS

With "Le Mouton," published in 1697 *(Les Contes de fées*, III),[96] the fairy tale enters the pastoral tradition and simultaneously rejects the aristocratic romanticism prominent in *L'Astrée*, a best-seller of the era that framed philosophical disquisition and erotic suspense in an eminently paradisiacal setting. Defined as the nobility's yearning for an idealized past, aristocratic romanticism responds to the increasing pressures of urbanization that accompanied the development of the centralized state.[97] An irreverent Aulnoy mocks her century's infatuation with the pastoral by transforming aristocrats into sheep rather than shepherds, and by tainting d'Urfé's bucolic paradise with the blood of sacrifice. The pervasive romanticism of "Le Pigeon et la Colombe" is abandoned in favor of the aristocratic heroine's ambition to rule in her father's stead, an aspiration unknown to d'Urfé's impassioned rhetoricians of love.

"Le Mouton" commences with the king's projected sacrifice of his daughter Merveilleuse, "un petit agneau qu'on alloit immoler" (425). However, the daughter escapes victimization, sets out disguised as a shepherdess in search of refuge, and forthwith encounters an exquisite sheep. Situated in the same phantasmic realm as Discrète's "small republic," Mouton's kingdom is peopled with metamorphosed creatures who await the expiration of various penances imposed by a vindictive fairy. In a departure from the era's fixation on the female body, Aulnoy focuses her heroine Merveilleuse's perspective on male sensuality. As if presaging the sheep's eventual immolation, the heroine's vision ceremoniously envelops the (transformed) male body in voluptuousness:

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[95] For discussions on the conservative functions of the salon, see Lougee, 212; Harth, *CW*, 63; Timmermans, 338. The role of the salon, at once conservative and subversive, is elaborated in later chapters.

In contrast to the above-mentioned critics, DeJean states her case for the suggestive power of women's fiction: "At times, even places with an existence no more 'real' than in the pages of a book—I think in particular of Madeleine de Scudéry's project in *Clélie* for a new affective topography—were far from socially impotent" (18).

[96] *NCF*, III, 424-47.

[97] Elias, 215-94. Elias recognized that this escape to an idyllic past was impossible, since the constraints of the court were self-imposed and integral to aristocratic identity.

> un gros mouton plus blanc que la neige, dont les cornes étoient dorées, qui avoit une guirlande de fleurs autour de son col, les jambes entourées de fils de perles d'une grosseur prodigieuse, quelques chaînes de diamans sur lui, & qui étoit couché sur des fleurs d'oranges; un pavillon de drap d'or suspendu dans l'air, empêchoit le soleil de l'incommoder; une centaine de moutons parés étoient autour de lui . . . . (429)

Clearly, Aulnoy embroiders on d'Urfé's own comparatively monochromatic description of Astrée's preferred sheep, who like King Mouton is white of color and sports a garland.[98] Not to be mistaken for her predecessor, Aulnoy's embellishments mark out the sheep's territory as a sensual one; envisioned by the heroine, Mouton becomes the embodiment of desire. Indeed, the sensuous dimension of the passage may indicate that Aulnoy herself was a reader of Plutarch: both the golden pavilion and the bedecked entourage appear to draw upon Plutarch's description of Cleopatre's initial appearance before Anthony.[99] Aulnoy celebrates the male body by framing it in heady perfumes, prolific flowers, cascades of rare liqueurs, pheasants, shrimp, and precious jewels. Indulged in a feast of unmeasured abundance, the indolent sheep is the creation of the female libido.

Such descriptive inventories as this one, sensually evocative as they are, lend a kind of bodily weight to the text, as the palace of nature is substituted for that of Versailles: "point d'autre palais qu'une longue suite d'orangers, de jasmins, de chèvrefeuilles & de petites roses muscades, dont les branches entrelacées les unes dans les autres formoient des cabinets . . ." (432). This untamed, natural realm owes much of its evocative power to Aulnoy's mastery of what Boileau derided as "useless detail." Indeed, he chose the very example of a palace description to proclaim that "Qui ne sait se borner ne sut jamais écrire."[100] Yet, Boileau himself, who disapproved of gratuitous description that distracted from textual coherence, could not have classified Aulnoy's prolific enumerations with the "abondance stérile" which he criticized. To the contrary, the sensory charge of Aulnoy's prolific inventories is almost palpable. Like the cascading fruits of desire in "Chatte Blanche," they erupt uncontrolled in a way akin to the body's appetites which they are meant to convey. Expressive of a certain irrepressible exuberance, these corporally mimetic descriptions serve to translate the body—that part of experience which exceeds rational mastery—into discourse. For a century that tended to idealize sexual repression, this was an ambitious undertaking indeed.

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[98] Honoré d'Urfé, *L'Astrée*, 143. The description is as follows: "La voilà, toute blanche sinon les oreilles qu'elle a noires, le nez, le tour des yeux, le bout de la queue et l'extrémité des quatre jambes; et afin qu'elle ne fût pas méconnue, regardez les noeuds que je lui ai vu porter plusieurs fois à l'entour des cornes en façon de guirlande."

[99] Madeleine de Scudéry is included among those of Aulnoy's contemporaries who were inspired by Plutarch's "Life of Anthony." Scudéry elaborates on Cleopatre's first appearance before Anthony in *Les Femmes illustres ou les harangues héroiques*, 55.

[100] *L'Art poétique*, I, v 60; I, v 63.

"Le Mouton" infuses aristocratic romanticism with a volatile mix of eroticism and sincerity, yet, the palace of nature ultimately cedes to the heroine's ambition. When Merveilleuse takes leave of King Mouton but fails to return at the appointed hour, the delicate hero's prediction—"je ne puis jamais vous faire un sacrifice plus complet" (443)—is accomplished. Indeed, the hero agonizes and dies at the very moment that the preoccupied heroine, who has just been crowned queen by her father, recounts her story to the assembled family: "Aussi-tôt elle prit la parole avec une grâce admirable & tout le monde attentif l'écoutoit" (445)[101]. Turning her back on the country retreat that aristocratic memoirs associate with disgrace and political failure,[102] Merveilleuse elects female ambition, even at the tragic price of King Mouton's death. Moreover, the closing moral of this cynical tale stresses that both the idyllic Forez-like retreat and its lovelorn hero are but mere fictions: the unfortunate Mouton "ne ressembloit pas aux hommes d'aujourd'hui" (447).

"LE SEXE" AND METAMORPHOSIS

Although Aulnoy is merely one of the several *conteuses* who engaged in fairy-tale writing, the unprecedented popularity of her writings implies that they struck a resonant chord in the contemporary imagination. One can assume that the vast public attracted to her works somehow identified with the world view expressed in her voluminous oeuvre, which exceeded the fairy-tale genre. And although both men and women composed the audience that gravitated toward this tale-telling *salonnière*, leisured women of the upper strata were perhaps her most devoted readers. If one can thus assume that to some degree Aulnoy speaks for other women of the seventeenth-century elite, what are women saying about the portrait of the female sex as fashioned by the men who attempted to define their nature?

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[101] Seifert analyzes the relationship of the heroine Merveilleuse to paternal authority in *FTSG*, 164-65. Seifert emphasizes that Aulnoy stands apart from other writers of fairy tales in her unflinching exploration of the "darkest sides of paternal authority."

[102] See Dewald, *AE*, 20.

First and foremost, Aulnoy broadens the concept of "le sexe," whether it designates women, as her era would have it, or sexuality itself. By giving equal weight to both the male and female body, Aulnoy extends the notion of sexuality, which is no longer associated with the ideal of women's repressed sensuality. The male body comes into focus in the form of a bestial Marcassin or the shape of an ethereal L'Oiseau Bleu. The female body is perceived as a hideous Babiole or a sensual mother ("Chatte Blanche"); virginal or maternal, desire escapes facile categorization.

Significantly, the household "prisons" of the moralists are emphatically refused in favor of the transformative adventures of metamorphosis. Indeed, Aulnoy's metamorphosed heroines can be linked to the legend of the swan maiden, a woman whose contradictory alliances situate her between human and animal worlds. Forced into conjugal servitude through marriage to a mortal, the swan maiden anticipates the moment when she will be able to flee domesticity and return to her supernatural realm.[103] Aulnoy's version of the swan maiden takes the opportunity afforded by metamorphosis to embark upon a process of self-affirmation that relies heavily on the affective dimension. A substitute for Perrault's economics of misalliance, shape-shifting promotes a new type of interaction between the sexes, one that unites them through their common sensuality, all the while neglecting the moralists' omnipresent family frame.[104]

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[103] For an analysis of the tradition of the swan maiden, see Barbara Fass Leavy's recent book, *In Search of the Swan Maiden*. According to Leavy, narratives that focus on this fantastic creature express the tension between the nature with which women are often associated, and the culture which they are expected to transmit to husband and children from the confines of the domestic hearth.

[104] One cannot say that Aulnoy's tales make no reference to the initial family situation that forces the heroine out of her birth home, but this reference is minimal. One might take exception in regard to "Le Mouton," yet the emphasis is on the heroine's ascension to power within her family; what is involved is a question of personal affirmation—which appears to coincide with dynastic interests. As for the conventional marriage endings, the brief concluding lines that allude to marriage must be put in context with the 20-60 odd pages devoted to the transformative adventure.

The circumvention of sexuality evidenced by the writings on the nature of women is replaced by the exploration of a psycho-sexual realm in which the mind-body split appears insignificant. A point of commonality between both moralists' portraits of women and Aulnoy's tales of metamorphosis involves the valorizing of non-rational forms of knowledge, with an important difference. The mystery that typifies men's portrait of the maternal body is transferred in Aulnoy's tales to the sensual realm itself. Moreover, in our *conteuse*'s narratives, the focus on sexuality is accompanied by a fixation on interiority. Aulnoy's metamorphic odysseys involve an unfolding of the self through the other, be it a male or female body.

Chapter Four

Mirrors of Invention: Towards an Aesthetics of Women's Fairy-Tale Writing

THE QUESTION OF STYLE

Both seventeenth- and twentieth-century readers of the French fairy tale have recognized that women's tales of the classical age are quite dissimilar from those authored by men. Although they may disagree as to the shade of this difference, commentators both old and new have sought to define the specificity of this body of writing that was dominated by women. For the most part, recent critical appraisal of the *conteuses*' tales has differed in degree, though perhaps not in essence, from that of the most vocal of seventeenth-century fairy-tale critics, the Abbé de Villiers. Villiers' *Entretiens sur les contes de fées* (1699), compared women's tales, "si longs & d'un style si peu naif " (69), to the authentic simplicity of Perrault's "superior" models. Translated into contemporary critical parlance, women's tales, possibly by virtue of the salons with which they were identified, have been classified as *précieux* in contrast to Perrault's more sober "classic" narratives. Indeed, Villiers' judgment citing excessive length and inauthenticity is reflected in the attention modern literary criticism has given to the *préciosité* of this corpus.

Most critics note the inordinate length of the women's tales, which are often referred to as "literary" in contrast to those of Perrault, generally described as more faithful to their folkloric sources. The influence of folklore on the era's fairy-tale production has, of course, long been recognized in scholarly circles, first and foremost by Mary Storer's 1928 *La Mode des contes de fées*. More recently, Raymonde Robert's extensive study of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fairy tale has disclosed that one third of all the tales written in the first vogue of fairy-tale writing (1690-1715) are affiliated with a tale of popular origin.[1] According to critical consensus, the amplified women's tales, which are approximately three times longer than those written by men, are dominated by *précieux* and novelistic elements lacking in the academician's more genuine versions. Many are the critics who relegate women's fairy-tale writing to the devalorized pole of the *précieux*-classic opposition. Mary Storer contrasts simplicity with *preciosité,* Mark Soriano pits authentic popular tales against those encumbered by fairy-tale magic, Teresa di Scanno opposes precision to prolixity, and Jean-Pierre Collinet measures economy of expression against mere profusion.[2] Other scholars including Jacques Barchilon, who recognizes that the *précieux* thematics and terminology is not exclusively gender-specific, are judicious in their recourse to this prevailing dichotomy.[3]

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[1] Robert's analysis relies on the authoritative classification drawn up by Marie-Louise Trézène and Paul Delaure. See *Le Conte de fées littéraire en France*, 127-28.

And yet, one must acknowledge that Raymonde Robert's evaluation, representing as it does the standard critical perspective, merits a considered response:

> une bonne partie des contes de l'époque sont trop longs; encombrés de développements romanesques stéréotypés, ils mettent en oeuvre la casuistique amoureuse de la préciosité et ne présentent plus qu'un intérêt strictement historique. (7)[4]

One must concede that judgments such as Robert's are based in part on an accurate description of the content of the vast majority of women's tales. For, it cannot be denied that the *conteuses*' narratives are rife with the identical extraordinary adventures at sea and recognition scenes typical of the century's long novels. Formally speaking, embedded narrations abound in both genres. Moreover, women's tales often incorporate what René Godenne's study of the seventeenth-century *nouvelle* has defined as "réalisme galant": conversations, verse, and exchange of portraits.[5] However, the *précieux*-classic polarity, often pertinent and at times unavoidable, tends like most dichotomies to be both reductive and hierarchical. By dint of its very clarity, it tends to obscure our view of a substantial body of works that express certain of the ideals held by French noblewomen in the Ancien Régime.[6]

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[2] Storer, *La Mode des contes de fées*, 107; Soriano, *Les Contes de Perrault*, xv; Di Scanno, *Les Contes de feés à l'époque classique, 102-03;* Collinet, *Contes*, 34. As a case in point, Soriano thus distinguishes between Perrault's tales and those authored by women: "Enfin, dans la mode des contes de fées dont il a déjà été question, on distingue deux courants extrêmement nets; les contes savants composés par des dames de la grande société, qui multiplient les péripéties féeriques, et au contraire les contes authentiquement populaires, qu'on reconnaît entre autres indices, par la relative discrétion dans l'emploi de la féerie qui les caractérise. Or les contes attribués à Perrault se rattachent très nettement à ce second courant" (Préface, XV).

[3] *Le Conte merveilleux français*, 63-64.

[4] Despite Robert's polarized distinction between women's tales and those of Perrault, she at times goes beyond the dichotomy to thus define the interest of women's narratives: "les conteuses surtout, vont aller beaucoup plus loin dans certains textes, et se mettre à manipuler le discours narratif, à le décaler par rapport aux modèles linguistiques reçus, à en subvertir les normes" (433).

Those critics who have ventured beyond the analytical framework described above, often circumvent the question of style as if wary of their own prejudices involving this corpus. For it cannot be denied that this body of texts can at times present a less than satisfactory reading experience for the uninitiated public. Women who published during the period in question were writing from a space at once privileged and circumscribed. Acknowledged as arbiters in matters cultural and literary, women's prominence was nonetheless built upon their exclusion from the very culture that they were called upon to judge. A case in point is Perrault's, *Apologie des femmes*, which based women's authority on their lack of education. Largely uneducated women were considered competent mediators because they were presumed to be untainted by the pedantry so inimical to the *honnête* conception of civilized behavior.[7] The much discussed, yet little analyzed style of women's tales can be in part attributed to their exclusion from the colleges where rhetoric, languages, philosophy, literature, and history were disseminated. Given this essential context, certain critics including Jeanne Morgan, Lewis Seifert, and Marcelle Maistre Welch have in varying degrees accounted for the "extravagant" style attributed to the *conteuses*. Morgan has stressed the contemporaneous allusions to the salon audience together with the *salonnières*' disrespect for the obligatory moral; Seifert, citing women's metacommentaries, has proposed the aristocratic "esthetic ideal of *negligence*," according to which all signs of effort were suppressed to create a certain aura of nonchalance; and Welch, referring to the prolific Aulnoy, has proposed an "esthétique rococo" imbued with parodic intent.[8]

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[5] Godenne, *Histoire de la nouvelle française aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*.

[6] Mieke Bal writes: "Dichotomies have two, inevitable consequences. They subsume all relevant phenomena under only two categories, thus restricting the possibilities and paralyzing the imagination—their centripetal quality. And they turn hierarchical, shedding off one pole as negative in favor of the other which needs to establish its value—their centrifugal quality." *On Storytelling: Essays in Narratology*, 9.

[7] See Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*, 55-59 and 166-67. See also Elizabeth L. Berg, "Recognizing Differences: Perrault's Modernist Rhetoric in the *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*," 144-45.

My own textual analyses of the *conteuses*' writing focuses on the distinctive properties of their narratives, while emphasizing the contexts of tale production. Not intended as a universalized poetics of women's writing, the aesthetics I here elaborate can be seen as a contextualized reading of a specific cultural production. To be sure, the question of literary style or merit is often avoided in the study of works by early modern women writers. However, such evasion merely serves to imply the inferiority of these writings and obscures the more important issues. Among the pertinent questions that can be clarified through close textual readings, I would include, for one, Mieke Bal's notion of the link between dominant ideologies and specific forms of representation, and, for another, Aron Kibedi-Varga's idea of the symbiotic relation between moral message and poetic structuration.[9] In other words, cultural imperatives as well as resistance to them can be inscribed in formal textual properties; meaning is of necessity conveyed through structure, whose elucidation casts light on the very production of culture.

My examination of the textual features of women's tales is indebted to Robert's delineation of those works inspired by popular folklore. Robert's scholarship enabled me to discover that thirteen of the tales published between 1690 and 1700 consist of men's and women's versions of the same basic story. This body of writing thus constitutes an ideal sample for expounding an aesthetics of women's tales in the context of those authored by men. In consequence, I focus in the present chapter on the *conteuses'* versions of three of these six tale pairs: Catherine Bernard's "Riquet à la houppe" (*Inès de Cordoue, nouvelle espagnole,* 1696), which, together with Perrault's tale of the same name (*Contes du temps passé,* 1697), is the sole pair not inspired by a discernible folkloric model; Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" (*Les Contes de fées*, III, 1697), which incorporates tale types 327 and 510 and corresponds to Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" and "Cendrillon" respectively; and Aulnoy's "La Biche au bois"

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[8] Morgan, *Perrault's Morals for Moderns*, 47-49; Seifert, "Tales of Difference," 185; Welch, "La Satire du rococo dans les contes de fées de Madame d'Aulnoy," 84. See also Welch, "Les Jeux de l'écriture dans les contes de fées de Mme. d'Aulnoy," 76. In the latter article, Welch describes Aulnoy's consciously naive style.

[9] See Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, 3; 6-7. See also Kibedi-Varga, *Les Poétiques du classicisme*, 30-31; 36.

(*Les Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode*, I, 1698), which, together with Jean de Mailly's "Blanche Belle" (*Les Illustres fées, contes galans*, 1698), shares the common tale type 403.[10] Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier and Henriette-Julie de Murat, who together with Aulnoy authored the remaining three women's versions of the six tale pairs, will be discussed in the final chapter.

DOUBLE VISION

Catherine Bernard's "Riquet à la houppe" expresses a profound Jansenist-inspired pessimism rare in the fairy tales under study. In this mercurial tale, being is in a state of constant flux which neither reason nor sentiment can arrest. What will terminate in a dissolution of the self begins as an oxymoronic vision whose fusion of mind and matter initiates the circulation of identities that marks the tale. Movement is the most prominent characteristic of this narrative whose duplicitous heroine Mama, born beautiful but unintelligent, is introduced to the reader through a play of antitheses. Creating a nearly palpable tension, the narrative frames the heroine's dynamic quest for identity by alternating between "âme" and "corps," "savoir" and "sentir": "il manquait une âme à son corps" (64). This lack animates Mama's desire for intelligence, which derives from the very division that characterizes her: "Mama . . . n'avait pas assez d'esprit pour *savoir* qu'elle n'en avait point, mais elle ne laissait pas de *sentir* qu'elle était dédaignée" (271, emphasis added). From the outset, the narrator eschews the certainty of definition by exclusion, all the while announcing the unsettling of dichotomies that will both define and jeopardize her heroine's story.

The blending of opposites intimated in the heroine's ability to intuit but not to reason, is dramatically underscored when Mama first meets Riquet, the gnome who will endow her with intellect. A brilliant but ugly creature, who, according to cabalistic tradition, presides over the earth's treasures, the gnome occasions the first of the heroine's two oxymoronic visions when he ascends from the depths of the land: "elle vit sortir de la terre un homme assez hidieux pour paraître un monstre" (271).[11] Since the hideous Riquet is also the embodiment of intelligence, the tale here presents a tableau of mind arising from matter, a conflation which, together with fourteen references to the gnome's physical and moral ugliness, serves to devalue the intelligence so prized by Cartesianism. The monstrous but knowledgeable Riquet's chthonic attributes illustrate the malefic uses of the powers of the intellect. Having arisen from the recesses of the earth, Riquet addresses Mama in a manner that recalls the regressive strains in the seventeenth-century's rendition of the *Querelle des femmes*.

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[10] Bernard's tale is included in Gilbert Rouger's edition of Perrault's *Contes*, 173-81; "Finette Cendron," *NCF*, III, 472-503; "La Biche au bois," *NCF*, IV, 349-410; "Blanche Belle," *NCF*, VI, 1-13. As in ch. II, Perrault's tales are quoted from Collinet's edition of the *Contes*.

The anti-hero's authoritative tone seeks to integrate the beautiful heroine into a hierarchy reminiscent of those set forth in the disquisitions on the nature of women:

> Avec votre beauté, vous avez je ne sais quoi qui fait qu'on ne vous regarde pas: c'est que vous ne pensez rien; et sans me faire valoir, ce défaut vous met infiniment au dessous de moi qui ne suis que par le corps ce que vous êtes par l'esprit. (271)

Although the authority Riquet attempts to establish through relations of subordination and domination will ultimately prove untenable, it is first shown to be intimately acquainted with the aristocratic philosophy of love that served as one of the pillars of court and salon society. Insofar as Riquet's power over the heroine is rendered possible by her desire for "esprit," the natural wit so prized in elite society, his longing to possess her assumes his likely knowledge and manipulation of court society protocol.

Riquet the creator, whose hubris sets him apart from mere mortals, is sardonically referred to as "l'auteur." Proposing to endow Mama with a new identity, the "author" merely assumes his male prerogative as understood by Grenaille: "l'homme semble estre l'âme de la femme. Cette matière donc exige sa forme."[12] To procure the wit she so avidly seeks, the heroine need merely promise to marry the gnome in one year's time, then repeat Riquet's formulaic text deriving from the Platonic and gallant tradition that extols the intelligence-inducing properties of love: "Toi qui peux tout animer, / Amour, si pour n'être plus bête, / Il ne faut que savoir aimer, / Me voilà prête" (272). According to gallant philosophy, love is a necessary condition for the development of the intellect.[13] Riquet's literary solution places him in the illustrious company of Poullain de la Barre—"Il n'y a que l'amour qui nous donne de l'esprit"—La Fontaine—"Il [love] fait venir l'esprit et la raison"—and Molière—"Et [love] donne de l'esprit à la plus innocente."[14] Indeed, Mama's "metamorphosis" into an intelligent woman places her at the very center of court society, where her fatal combination of beauty and brains arouses love, infidelity and jealousy. However, by virtue of its implicit condoning of personal choice, this "civilization of love" will be undermined from within. For after the heroine promises marriage and is subsequently endowed with intellect, she escapes Riquet's tyranny—"ce défaut vous met infinement au dessous de moi"—and simultaneously challenges his authorial rights to her story.

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[11] Nicolas de Montfaucon de Villars' *Comte de Gabalis ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes* (1670) introduced many of his contemporaries to a popularized version of cabalistic theories. See Robert, 181-87.

[12] François de Grenaille, *L'Honneste Mariage*, 322. See also ch. I.

The undermining of the romantic conception of the transformational powers of love coincides with the disruption of linear narrative as the reader is made aware of the tale's fictional status: "Il n'y a rien d'impossible à une femme d'esprit qui aime," cautions the narrator, and rightly so. When Mama's new cognitive faculties serve her sentiment, she becomes an author in her own right, while seeking to elide the authority that Riquet strives to impose. Obeying a logic of its own, Mama's love for Arada, the most illustrious of her suitors, emboldens her to vie with the "author" Riquet in order to narrate her own story of private emotion, "une nouvelle sorte de bonheur." Significantly, the writerly competition between Riquet and Mama signals a divided narrator. For clearly, the latter's nihilistic polemic on the powerlessness of reason in the face of nature is provisionally contradicted by "a new kind of happiness," one with a markedly individual and perhaps erotic dimension. As we shall see, the narrator's ambivalence, mirrored in the rival protagonists Riquet and Mama, is eloquently summarized by the coexistence of opposites which concludes the tale. The pessimistic appraisal of love which links Bernard's "Riquet" to her own novel *Les Malheurs de l'amour* (1687) as well as to a group of women authors including Lafayette and Villedieu, reflects the crisis in the amorous sensibility of the times.[15] Given that the competition between the "authors" Riquet and Mama cannot be resolved, this irresolution is in itself an expression of the pessimism which marked the novels of the last twenty-odd years of the century.

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[13] See Jean-Michel Pelous, *Amour précieux, amour galant*, 234.

[14] Poullain is quoted by Pelous, 235; La Fontaine, "Comment l'Esprit vient aux filles," *Oeuvres complètes*, 547; Molière, *L'Ecole des femmes*, III, 4, v. 909. La Fontaine's poem is a disabused wink at the tracts on women's nature: Lise's new-found intelligence is a direct consequence of Bonaventure's sexual prowess. See also "La Courtisane amoureuse," 513.

According to Bernard, there is no law in love, thus the confrontation between the hero and heroine's amorous scripts infuses the text with a movement born of uncertainty. This textual instability fosters the ultimate demise of Riquet's dominion at the same time that it promotes Mama's duplicity.[16] The heroine's status as "une femme d'esprit qui aime" links her intelligence to what is described as an inevitable concession to nature: "mais défendre d'aimer à une jeune et jolie personne, ce serait défendre à un arbre de porter des feuilles au mois de mai" (273). Rather than contain the forces of nature, reason becomes instead the accomplice of a passion whose redemptive aspects, moreover, are not apparent. Enhanced by her newly discovered intellectual abilities, Mama's duplicitous character is underscored shortly after her marriage to Riquet. The jealous gnome, having discovered his wife's trysts with her beloved Arada, summons his magic powers to put an end to her infidelity. Reneging on his gift as she defaulted on her contract, Riquet renders her stupid by day yet intelligent by night. As we have seen, metamorphic oscillation governed by a nocturnal-diurnal axis is a frequent motif in Aulnoy's tales, as exemplified by the unstable identities of the protective fairy's "small republic." Both Aulnoy and Bernard multiply the facets of subjectivity by alternating the corporeal or mental states of their characters.

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[15] See DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, 127-58; Pelous, 475; Hipp, *Mythes et Réalités: enquête sur le roman et les mémoires*,1600-1700, 489. According to Hipp, the literary traditions based on *L'Astrée* promoted the notion of a profound harmony between love and noble character. An entire literary current at the end of the century challenges this optimistic appraisal (489). See also ch. III.

[16] The heroine's very name, "Ma-ma," suggestively embodies the duality that will first liberate her, then destroy her. Indeed, one might surmise that the repetition of the possessive adjective "ma" expresses an attempt to focus on and seize the ever elusive self, and thus reflects the latter's contingent status. Moreover, the echo of Pascal's "Mien tien" ("Ma-ma") reverberates in the reader's memory to suggest the self-centeredness of the heroine's infidelity ("Misère de l'homme," *Oeuvres completes*, Gallimard, #231, 1151).

Lewis Seifert interprets the name "Mama" as "the means by which the tale denounces the heroine's gradual but no less certain enclosure in maternal domesticity." *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender*, 211. See Seifert's analysis of Bernard's and Perrault's "Riquet" on p. 205-211.

When the two *conteuses* address the shifting boundaries of the self, they initiate an inward journey which carves out a space, albeit provisional, for privacy. Bernard's private domain too, is framed by a tentative eroticism which is nonetheless singularly void of the optimism so characteristic of Aulnoy. Once the demonic Riquet has endowed Mama with intelligence and destabilized the hierarchy that alone guaranteed his authority, the heroine sets out to prove the narrator's assertion that "Il n'est rien d'impossible à une femme d'esprit qui aime." Each nightfall as Mama's mental sharpness revives, the wily heroine drugs the unsuspecting Riquet and returns to Arada, with whom she experiences a "new kind of happiness":

> leur disgrâce ne servait qu'à leur faire goûter une nouvelle sorte de bonheur; l'esprit et l'amour de Mama lui fournissaient mille expédients pour être agréable et pour faire oublier à Arada qu'elle manquait d'esprit la moitié du temps. (277)

As Lewis Seifert has noted, the heroine's intellectual gifts merely serve to encourage her to practice the art of deception.[17]

The pleasures of illicit love are enhanced by the deceitful Mama's talent for storytelling: "Mama lui fit le récit de ses malheurs et ils furent adoucis par le plaisir qu'elle eut de les lui conter" (277). Once again, one must question the presumably anodyne nature of the thematics of love that characterized women's writings of the period.[18] In this tale, the heroine's passion is intimately linked to her autobiography—"le récit de ses malheurs"—itself the mise-en-scène of self-identity. Moreover, Mama's new, self-assertive eloquence, intertwined as it is with her infidelity, represents a challenge to Riquet's role as the representative of order and authority. Nevertheless, this private space of individual expression finally yields to the text's irrepressible movement—"un état passablement heureux ne saurait durer longtemps," warns the narrator—which terminates in the heroine's second oxymoronic vision.

After concluding that his wife's obstinate nature cannot be contained, Riquet flicks his magic wand and deprives the heroine of her mental faculties in an ingeniously cruel manner:

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[17] Following Seifert, both Perrault's and Bernard's tales highlight the danger of female imagination. Bernard's tale highlights the devious qualities of women's intellectual powers (209-210).

[18] On the issues of women's writing and the politics of love, see DeJean, 14-15.

> il ne dit rien, mais il toucha l'amant d'une baguette qui le rendit d'une figure semblable à la sienne; et ayant fait plusieurs tours avec lui, Mama ne le distingua plus de son époux. Elle se vit deux maris au lieu d'un et ne sut jamais à qui adresser ses plaintes." (278)

When the authority figure is doubled in the mind's eye of the heroine, both her private world and her autobiography are engulfed in a dizzying state of flux first intimated by the crossing of polarities that initiated the tale. Neither interior sentiment, the senses, nor intelligence can guarantee against Mama's final madness as represented by this double vision. One can discern in Bernard's unmitigated pessimism certain ideological currents that marked the latter part of the century, among them the devaluing of amorous idealism and what Paul Béncihou identified as the dissolution of the self.[19] Indeed, Mama recalls the earlier Bernard heroine of *Les Malheurs de l'amour*, who nearly dissolves in a sea of tears by the novel's end. Clearly, the Pascalian strains in Bernard's tale are of a more serious nature than Aulnoy's flirting with the "Château des Solitaires" in "Serpentin Vert."

Diametrically opposed to Aulnoy's optimism, Bernard's cynicism focuses on what for her century was an impossible coexistence of contraries, "une femme d'esprit qui aime." Perhaps Mama's semblance of madness in the tale's final scene is an acknowledgment of the narrator's failure to write at crosscurrents to the prevalent ideologies on women's identity. If one accepts this interpretation, one might then assume that the heroine's descent into partial insanity represents a concession that the era's notions on *le sexe* cannot yet be surpassed. Insofar as this Cartesian century associated madness with the body —"la folie n'est qu'une faute des sens et du corps . . . la folie [est] une erreur du corps, une chose du corps"[20]—Mama's final predicament imprisons her in an "inferior" sensuality. Yet, however restricted the heroine's ultimate destiny, it is assumed only after her challenge to Riquet's authority. The greater part of the reading experience witnesses Mama's success in substituting her own storytelling, indeed her own (amorous) autobiography, for Riquet's most imperious passion.

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[19] Bénichou, *Morales du grand siècle*, 161.

[20] Quoted from Jacques Derrida, *L'Ecriture et la différence*, 80.

THE MORAL OF THE FORM

In 1677, the society journal *Le Mercure galant* thus evaluated Perrault's literary style: "Monsieur Perrault has what is called a mind of good taste, which never indulges in false brilliance. He writes, and knows how one should write."[21] Recent critics too are unanimous in their acclaim for Perrault's classical style, which is often related to his important contributions to the official dictionary of the French language, *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1694).[22] Perrault's membership in both the French Academy and the Petite Academy, along with his intimate association with Colbert, assured his active role in absolutism's stronghold over cultural production. It is not surprising that this academician who played a central role in the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns represents the epitome of the French classical writing style.

According to Jean Rousset, the classicists defined themselves in opposition to the baroque style which we will later examine. What Wilfried Floeck terms the classical aesthetic of unity is here defined by Rousset as the counterpart of the baroque aesthetic of diversity:

> au lieu de se présenter comme l'unité mouvante d'un ensemble uniforme, l'oeuvre classique réalise son unité en immobilisant toutes ses parties en fonction d'un centre fixe . . . au lieu de faire éclater ou vaciller ses structures, elle les stabilise et les renforce.[23]

The centralized unity and structural stability which, according to Rousset, define the classical style, do indeed characterize Perrault's prose tales. The pleasure of reading the *Contes du temps passé* derives in part from a carefully articulated ensemble built on symmetrical oppositions and sustained by linear development. The figure of antithesis, which according to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetics*, is grounded in rationality and serves to divide and classify, is prominent in Perrault's fairy tales (596). The Perraldian corpus then, appears to illustrate what Michel Foucault has defined as the *épistème classique*, which preferred the analytical mode of thought to one based on analogy and resemblance.[24] The academician's fairy-tale world is an eminently hierarchical one, often inspired by traditional notions on women's nature as examined in the first chapter. While one cannot deny that Perrault's gender hierarchies are consistently challenged by assertive female characters, the will to reassert order, a perceptible and sometimes violent undercurrent in his tales, contradicts women's ascendancy. Clearly, the Perraldian universe cannot claim the apparent liberalism that reigns in Discrète's "petite république," where "rien n'étoit assorti selon son espèce." Indeed, the tale we are about to examine elects a most conservative politics regarding the conventionally unequal relation between the sexes.

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[21] October 1677, p. 125. Quoted by Morgan, 11.

[22] Collinet reminds us that the *Dictionnarie de l'Académie* appeared in 1694, the same year that saw the publication of "Peau d'Ane." Collinet stresses the symbiosis between the language of the Dictionary and that of Perrault's tales: "l'écrivain [Perrault] se borne à jouer du clavier lexicologique mis à sa disposition depuis peu par ce précieux instrument de travail, dont il s'est efforcé, selon les directives de Colbert, d'activer l'élaboration et l'achèvement à partir de son entrée dans la Compagnie" (*Contes*, 34).

[23] Rousset, *La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et le Paon*, 246; Floeck, *Esthétique de la diversité: pour une histoire du baroque littéraire en France*.

Perrault's version of "Riquet à la houppe" seems to adhere to the laws of identity and difference inherent in contrastive symmetry, whereas Bernard's tale transgresses these same laws through the fusion of contraries.[25] Where Bernard practices conflation, Perrault substitutes differentiation and logical exclusion based on the binary oppositions that define the antithetical figure. Indeed, most readers, seduced by the classical symmetry of Perrault's text, have overlooked certain inconsistencies of plot in this eminently reasonable love story.[26] Upon examination, it can be seen that these diegetic incongruities arise from the very structural integrity of the tale, one that is intimately related to its moral message.

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[24] *Les Mots et les choses*, 60-91. Although Foucault's thesis on historical ruptures has been much criticized, one still finds numerous references to the notion in recent literary and historical studies. Foucault's hypothesis is surely problematic and clearly not does take into account women's fairy tales. However, in the case of Perrault, Foucault's description appears valid to a certain degree. According to Aron Kibedi-Varga, seventeenth-century classical poetics is defined by a mode of thought based on similitude and analogy. The taxonomies of classical poetology are characterized by a play of identity and difference that subsumes phenomena under a single principle and thus suggests the transparency and reversibility of the classifications (9-10). Kibedi-Varga also notes that antithesis and synonym are the two privileged figures of classical discourse (10-11).

[25] "Riquet à la houppe," in Collinet, 181-88.

[26] These plot inconsistencies are discussed by Morgan, 103-07; Jeanne Roche-Mazon, "De qui est 'Riquet à la houppe' "; Louis Marin, *Food for Thought*, 162-63.

Given his work in the Academy, one may assume that Perrault had first-hand knowledge of the theories of literary creation enunciated by its eminent theoreticians. As we know, classical poetics, which assumed the edifying end of all art, provided for the incorporation of the moral in its poetic treatises. Indeed, the latter elaborate the textual procedures by which the moral is to be integrated into the work of art. According to these theories, the plot of a fictional work is to be fashioned in such a way that the moral lesson becomes a principle of poetic structuring: "L'exigence morale devient . . . un principe de structuration."[27] To illustrate the requisite relation between moral and form, one need only cite the theoretician Le Bossu's *Traité du poème épique* (1675): "Dans tout ce qu'on entreprend avec conduite, la fin qu'on se propose est toujours la première chose que l'on a dans l'esprit, et sur laquelle on règle l'ouvrage entier dans toutes ses parties."[28] Perrault's "Riquet" adheres to what one might call classical poetology's moral of the form, which, as we shall see, is not unrelated to gender.

Louis Marin's analysis has shown that this tale, based on an ideological opposition between beauty and intelligence, commences with a lack of symmetry: one queen gives birth to a son, the intelligent but ugly Riquet; whereas the second queen has two daughters, the first of whom is beautiful and stupid, while the second shares Riquet's fate.[29] The first daughter has the power to endow her beloved with beauty just as Riquet can render his loved one intelligent. In order to illustrate how Perrault corrects this initial dissymmetry, Marin focuses on two story elements, that is, Riquet's name and the underground kitchen scene in which Riquet proposes to the heroine. First, onomastics situates the hero, "Riquet à la houppe," on the margins of humanity and animality; like the hoopoe bird, the hero is distinguished by the tuft of feathers which crowns his head. In Marin's perspective, this tuft associates Riquet with the legend of Terseus, who was transformed into a hoopoe as the penalty for his rape of Philomela. Riquet's tuft is a sign that implicates him in Terseus's crime of desire. Second, the kitchen scene, which transpires after the heroine has accepted Riquet's gift of intelligence, represents the sublimation of violent erotic desire through the institution of marriage. The tale achieves symmetry through this latter scene, which restores the harmony between Eros and Logos, beauty and intelligence (162-74).

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[27] Kibedi-Varga, 33. See also 31-36.

[28] Quoted by Kibedi-Varga, 35. See also 140.

[29] Marin, 62-74.

One might also add that Perrault's narrative maneuvers toward this symmetrical resolution constitute a story in and of themselves. For just as the legend of Terseus is suggested by Riquet's tuft of hair, so too the opposed ancient philosophical principles of male and female, which characterize both Renaissance Aristotelianism and the *Querelle des femmes*, are inscribed in the antithetical figures that construct Perrault's tale.[30]

The inconsistencies of plot signaled by critics include two characters who vanish from the narrative without explanation, the intelligent but ugly sister of the heroine and Riquet's handsome and witty rival for the heroine's affections. Yet upon examination, one concludes that this suppression of character is not due to the narrator's inattention. Instead, these apparent discrepencies might be defined as deliberate rhetorical "lapses" which are essential to the tale's structural *and* moral integrity. Relying on parallel dichotomies to articulate a persuasive moral lesson, the narrator shows little interest in the "rights" of characters whose moral attributes exceed the confines of the message articulated by the narrative's very structure. Even the protagonist's apparently negative physical traits are diminished in the interests of the tale's unequivocal moral frame. In spite of the duality implied in Riquet's contrasting physical and intellectual make-up, monstrous appearance is consistently subdued to underscore intellectual mastery together with a pleasant *honnête* manner: "il avait dans toutes ses actions je ne sais quoi de si spirituel qu'on en était charmé" (181). Moreover, the hero's fine intellect is guaranteed by the fairy who presides over his birth and, structurally speaking, over the entire tale.

From the outset, Riquet's superior mind is highlighted by the contiguous portrait of his afflicted mother. The latter, irremediably marked by the inferiority of matter through the ugly child she produces, mediates her son's relation to bestiality by deflecting it onto her aggrieved maternal body. The moralist Le Moyne, for example, emphasized women's accountability in the matter of childbirth:

> Toutes les bonnes & les mauvaises qualitez leur viennent des Vertus & des vices de leur Mère. Ils prennent . . . goutte à goutte dans leurs ventres, les

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[30] See Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, 6-7; 47. See also ch. I.

> différentes semences & les diverses teintures du Bien et du Mal, détrempées de leur sang, & meslées à leurs humeurs.[31]

While one might concede that Le Moyne's assertion of women's responsibility implies an active and thus positive role for the female in childbirth, his insistence on women's agency should be qualified by the knowledge that the special prayers which the era's moralists composed for future mothers offered consolation at the expense of assigning blame: prayers for expecting mothers underscored female culpability by claiming that the pain of childbirth was a fitting recompense for the sinful act of copulation.[32] By the very fact of her affliction, Riquet's mother, whom the narrative describes as "bien affligée," assumes responsibility for her malformed child, while implicitly confessing her role as the source of worldly imperfection. Here, then, are the foundations of the gender-inflected mind-matter antithesis which not only generates the tale but also accents it in the manner of a leitmotiv.

When the fairy who presided over Riquet's birth reappears as "la même fée" to mark the occasion of the birth of two royal daughters in a neighboring kingdom, her role as the agent of tale symmetry is clear. The fairy's presence serves to oppose the parallel births while reinstating the initial opposition between mind and matter. The second queen in the tale is overjoyed at the sight of her first child, a stunning beauty. However, her joy is gravely tempered when the "same fairy" thus addresses her: "La *même fée* . . . lui déclara que cette petite Princesse n'aurait point d'esprit, et qu'elle serait aussi stupide qu'elle était belle" (181). This suggestive parallel, which implies that the beautiful princess' birth is merely an inverted variation of Riquet's, can be related to what Peter Brooks has defined as a process of textual "binding," meaning the recalls that serve the economy of the narrative by linking different textual parts through similarity and substitution.[33]

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[31] Le Moyne, *La Gallerie des femmes fortes*, 272.

[32] Wendy Gibson, *Women in Seventeenth-Century France*, 76. Gibson notes that "special prayers were composed for pregnant women, but their consolatory effect was dubious since they stressed the pain and suffering that justly ensued from the sinful act of conception."

[33] Brooks, "Freud's Masterplot," 289-90. "Repetition in all its literary manifestations may in fact work as a 'binding,' a binding of textual energies that allows them to be mastered by putting them into serviceable form within the energetic economy of the narrative. Serviceable form must in this case mean perceptible form: repetition, repeat, recall, symmetry, all these returns to and returns of, that allow us to bind one textual

The "same fairy" signals at once a disguised return of fictional event, meaning Riquet's birth, and of ideological intent, that is, the valorizing of masculine intelligence over feminine corporeality. In addition to recalling the tale's first paragraph which it repeats through inversion, "La même fée" calls to mind a more distant (repressed) textual memory, that of the *Querelle des femmes*, which, as we have seen, defined the moral attributes of the sexes according to the philosophical opposition between mind and matter.

The dissimulated link just established between Riquet and the first princess is reiterated when the second queen gives birth to another daughter, who, like Riquet, is physically repulsive but intellectually gifted. Superimposed on the portrait of the first queen's suffering, that of the second queen, doubled as it is by two imperfect children, obsessively repeats a portrait of maternal grief and mortification. Lest the reader have any doubts, Perrault's complicity with the most regressive elements of the *Querelle*, here the implicit association of women with flesh and the devil, is forcefully implied by this representation of disgraced motherhood.[34] Moreover, the latter's humiliation is exacerbated by the remarkable absence of the (guiltless) fathers. Clearly, from the tale's very beginning, the moral message inscribed in its reiterated antitheses bespeaks the inferiority of matter. Even the fairy's gift-giving, itself a form of predictive narration,[35] empowers her protégés by doubling their essence according to a sexual polarity: just as the physically perfect but mentally defective heroine can endow Riquet with her own essential quality, so too can the intellectually astute but physically deformed hero share his own innate gifts. Recounting in and of themselves a story that goes back to or "returns" to the (repressed) theses of the *Querelle des femmes*, the gifts bestowed by the fairy predetermine the tale that the narrator is about to tell.

If one considers that part of Perrault's story is disclosed through the textual maneuvers that he practices in order to avoid destabilizing the traditional mind-matter polarity, the sudden disappearance of the second queen's daughter, the bright but unattractive princess, is most logical. Given that this princess is both intelligent and female, she transgresses the initial

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moment to another in terms of similarity and substitution rather than mere contiguity."

[34] Maclean notes that certain seventeenth-century moralists still associated women with the devil and the pleasures of the flesh (66).

[35] Gerald Prince's *Dictionary of Narratology* defines predictive narration as "A narrative in which the narration precedes the narrated in time" (76).

opposition between male intellect and female materiality. Yet, although she is an anomaly according to the moral logic of the tale, her provisional existence contributes to the coherence of the text in that it serves to recall once again the governing leitmotiv; when offered the choice, suitors prefer the younger princess' intelligence to her older sister's mindless beauty. Bored by the speechless beauty, the eligible princes flock to the side of the younger princess: "L'aînée quoique fort stupide, le remarqua bien, et elle eût donné sans regret toute sa beauté pour avoir la moitié de l'esprit de sa soeur" (182). Nonetheless, the narrator eventually abandons this heroine since her attributes exceed the moral symmetry of the tale. Once the witty, unattractive princess has served the narrator's purpose of obsessive recall, he dismisses her, since any further elaboration of her character would destabilize the traditional gender relations which are at the very heart of his optimistic portrayal of love. To be sure, after the elder princess' transformation at the hands of Riquet, she possesses both her innate beauty and a new intellectual confidence. However, the latter derives from Riquet, who plays the role of compliant mentor to this lovely and eager apprentice.[36]

Like Bernard's Mama, Perrault's heroine, once mentally endowed, falls in love with a handsome *and* intelligent admirer. Yet, unlike Arada, Perrault's ephemeral suitor unceremoniously vanishes as rapidly as the *inclination* that he inspired in the heroine. Insofar as this admirer represents a blending of masculine wit and feminine beauty, his peremptory dismissal obeys narrative logic. In accordance with the latter, the unnamed beau must be discarded since any development of his character would shatter the positive depiction of love's beneficial powers, which is the moral core of the tale. Clearly, any elaboration of this male character would entail focusing on the issue of the heroine's personal choice, her *inclination*, in the face of authority. One can see that such a development exceeds the rational logic of a text whose heroines moreover, remain nameless. Indeed, Perrault's onomastic politics serves to shift the focus from what could be a troublesome liaison to the rational progress of a conventional marriage.

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[36] Unlike my own, Philip Lewis' analysis of this tale stresses the reciprocity of the exchanges between the hero and heroine. According to Lewis, the protagonists share a basic equality which is grounded in their respective desires to supplement what each of them lack. Emphasizing the psychological dimension of the exchange that marks the relationship between Riquet and the heroine, Lewis discerns a vacillation between a masculine order based on intelligence, reason, and speech, and its feminine counterpart founded on beauty and vision. Riquet, assuming a mentorship role, activates the heroine's "inhibited capacity" for intellectual endeavors. On the other hand, the heroine, endowed with her new mental powers, enacts an envisioning or "spiritualization of Riquet's body." Lewis' analysis should be read in its entirety. *Seeing Through the Mother Goose Tales*, 38-41; 249-255.

Therefore, the discarded admirer, like the younger princess, acts to reinforce tale symmetry, together with Riquet's (intellectual) authority. For narrative logic underscores the heroine's preference for the hero's gallant rhetoric, which extols love and reason over spontaneous *inclination*: "Est-il raisonnable que les personnes qui ont de l'esprit soient d'une pire condition que ceux qui n'en ont pas?" pleads the reasonable Riquet. "Le pouvez-vous prétendre, vous qui en avez tant, et qui avez tant souhaité d'en avoir?" he argues. "A la réserve de ma laideur y a-t-il quelque chose en moi qui vous déplaise? Etes-vous mal contente de ma naissance, de mon esprit, de mon humeur, et de mes manières?" concludes the hero (186). In this gallant conversation, love is a matter of reasoning and rhetorical persuasion rather than an affair of the heart. As such, it upholds the ideals of the "civilization of love" at the very moment when these notions are losing ground, especially in women's novels.

Pelous does indeed situate the *Contes* in the gallant tradition, which Perrault considered to be an important part of French cultural heritage handed down from antiquity.[37] The influence of gallantry surfaces in the context of the underground kitchen scene analyzed by Marin. When read alongside Grenaille's *Les Plaisirs des dames,* this episode in which Riquet prepares a culinary banquet to woo his lady love, comports a gallant dimension: "on met bien plus de soin à gaigner des amantes que des amis, & que si on fait bonne chère aux hommes, on ne traitte jamais les Dames à moins que de les regaller" (241-42). Asserting that attentive suitors are equally skilled in warrior feats and gourmet feasts, Grenaille concludes with a warning: "La lubricité suit d'ordinaire la bonne chère" (248-49). Perhaps then, Riquet's gallantry is in conflict with the domestic bliss portrayed in Perrault's *Apologie des femmes*. Such a hypothesis is in part verified by Marin's own analysis, which sees in Riquet's tuft of hair a mark implicating the hero in Terseus' criminal lust. And although one might assume that the antithetically fashioned text, based largely on conclusions, does not lend itself to surprises, this masterpiece of symmetry conceals many for the attentive reader.[38]

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[37] See Pelous, 475-76.

Before the tale concludes, Riquet, citing "la même fée" who presided over both of their births, finally informs the heroine that she too possesses magic powers and can render him handsome at will. As Seifert has observed, such deliberate withholding of knowledge on the part of the hero is yet another mark of his intellectual superiority over the unwitting heroine.[39] Indeed, Riquet's holding back of information summons up the case of Bluebeard, who used the knowledge that he himself had invented to dominate his wife. Even when intelligent, the heroine is subordinated to Riquet's power, while dependent on his authority. The hero's final reference to "the same fairy" reiterates for the ultimate time the initial tale antithesis. As a consequence, the incoherence of plot that constitutes Riquet's surprising knowledge of the heroine's powers, coincides with the coherence of ideology.

As the agent of symmetry, the fairy is a kind of centrifugal force radiating out from the tale's center while fixing all characters and events in the lines of her ideological force.[40] Her ordering, accomplished through reiterated antitheses, leads one to conclude that the entirety of the tale's contrasting oppositions are of her province. Since her gifts signal her authorial powers as the text's organizing mechanism, she is a double for the artist, and thus privy to hidden meanings (idealized love involves an active male and passive female) and the secrets of form (form transmits a moral).[41] The fairy's or the artist's predictive narration affixes characters to one or another pole of the gender-determined beauty-intelligence dichotomy, with the consequence that her "gifts" merely transpose imposed cultural identities. In Perrault's "Riquet à la houppe," repetitive contrastive symmetry lends a certain weight or textual density to a moral message enunciated as early as the tale's opening paragraphs and reaching back in repressed memory to the male and female principles that inform the *Querelle des femmes*. The concluding line of "Riquet" testifies to the force of anterior narration which seals the heroine's fate: "Dès le lendemain les noces furent faites, ainsi que Riquet à la houppe l'avait *prévu,* et selon les ordres qu'il avait donnés *longtemps auparavant* (187, emphasis added)."

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[38] According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Aristotle recommended antithesis as a form of satisfying expression and compared it to syllogism, "for it is by putting opposing conclusions side by side that you refute one of them" (40). The notion that argument by antithesis deals with conclusions coincides with the definition of predictive narration, when the story is told before it actually occurs.

[39] See Seifert, *FTSG*, 208. In opposition to Lewis, Seifert underscores the lack of reciprocity between the two protagonists, despite the apparent resolution of their differences. As Seifert points out, the tale's alternate ending, which elides the question of whether or not Riquet actually became handsome, infers that the heroine's powers are "all in her head" (209).

[40] Describing the fairy's gifts to the protagonists, Collinet suggests the fairy's link to symmetry: "Surtout, par un effet de symétrie qui bouleverse l'économie du récit et change sa signification, elle possède, par la grâce de la même fée, le privilège de rendre beau qui lui plaira" (291).

[41] In regard to the fairy's function as a stand-in for the author, see Catherine Velay-Vallantin's "Louis Marin, lecteur de Charles Perrault." Discussing Louis Marin's interpretation of the frontispiece, Velay-Vallantin shows how Perrault stages his role as narrator through the figure of the peasant grandmother, herself a precursor

AMBIVALENT INVENTIONS

Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" is at once a feminization of folklore, an expression of the tensions and contradictions which defined aristocratic identity, and a stage for displaying the talents of the inventive writer. As early as the title of this 1697 tale, the narrator alludes to the act of textual composition by combining two recognizably distinct folkloric characters: "Finette" corresponds to tale type 327, whereas "Cendron" is modeled on type 510. This initial writing by conflation undermines the fictional illusion by signaling the narrator's tampering with the folkloric heritage Perrault sought to claim for the modern French nation. As in other tales written by women, amplification, which is closely bound to textual self-consciousness, serves to unsettle rather than to consolidate linear narrative. Yet, although the disruption of symmetry requires that character delineation be continually restated in conjunction with specific actions, it does not guarantee an unconditionally active heroine. Instead, in "Finette Cendron" as in the majority of women's tales, conformity intersects with invention as the passive heroine is superimposed on her active counterpart.

The conflated title "Finette Cendron" illustrates the ambivalence of women's narratives by adding the active "Finette" of the initial story to the entirely passive "Cendron" of the final one. However, even before the enterprising Finette's story is begun, it is prefaced by that of her inventive queen mother whose adventures foretell her daughter's own initiative.

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of the fairy's active role in the *Contes* (272-73).

Enlarging the domain of women's tasks to include the crafting of stories, the exiled queen mirrors the narrator's own work while directing the reader's attention to the shifting space between the story and the act of composing it. Poverty, represented as a synecdochic dismantling of the accoutrements of sovereignty, drives the king and queen out of their kingdom: "Ils vendirent leurs couronnes pour vivre, puis leurs habits, leurs linges, leurs dentelles & leurs meubles, pièce à pièce" (472). Yet, despite the rigors of impoverishment, exile encourages feminine invention and at the same time reverses the hierarchies so characteristic of the writings on women's nature:

> Quand le roi & la reine furent bien pauvres, le roi dit à sa femme: nous voilà hors de notre royaume, nous n'avons plus rien, il faut gagner notre vie & celle de nos enfants; avisez un peu ce que nous avons à faire, car jusqu'à présent je n'ai su que le métier de roi qui est fort doux (472).

Whether through the route of the metamorphosed body or the shock of economic catastrophe, dispossession in women's fairy tales is synonymous with invention and antithetical to our preconceived notions of a defeated and pacified aristocracy.[42] Although the nobility's memoirs of the period equated the move from the court to the countryside with personal and political disgrace, aristocratic *conteuses* transform the shame of exile into a celebration of individual initiative.[43] Banishment provides the divested queen of "Finette Cendron" with a stage for enacting her innovative powers, which at once suggest and reflect the narrator's own creative act. The practical queen assuages the sovereign's anxiety: "Sire, il ne faut point nous affliger; vous n'avez qu'à faire des filets dont vous prendrez des oiseaux à la chasse & des poissons à la pêche. Pendant que les cordelettes s'useront, je *filerai* pour en faire d'autres" (472, emphasis added). "Filer," to weave, is associated with both women's tasks and with the Fates (*les Parques*) who preside over man's destiny. According to Richelet, "filer" "se dit des Parques en parlant de la vie; 'Les Parques filent notre vie'."

Emulating the Fates who determine the destiny of mortals, the queen controls the king's fate beyond the kingdom by conceiving the plot that he will enact once outside its limits. Resilient to change, the queen recasts her own and her husband's roles in such a way that the prerogatives of birth fade into irrelevance. One might even conclude that bankruptcy enables this royal entrepreneur to exercise her wits while at the same time avoiding the penalties of derogation. The queen's reinvention of roles, superimposed on the narrator's own recasting of folklore, makes this in part a revisionist tale. Like her ingenious predecessors Penelope and Philomela, the queen, the narrator, and by extension, women writers themselves, compose plots that weave in and out of conventional narratives. Indeed, the weaving image, described by Dällenbach as the emblematic metaphor of textual composition,[44] identifies the common work of character and narrator at the same time that it implicates "Mesdames les fées," our salon-affiliated *conteuses*, in the act of writing. As we have seen, "fée" derives from "fata," meaning the Fates. Assuming a name that offered them an etymological parentage with the mythological *Parques*, women fairy-tale writers implicitly claim the authority to invent alternative destinies.

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[42] See Mark Motely, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, 8-9.

[43] See Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*, 163.

Framing the entire tale with a hint of subversion, the queen's initiative may be considered an anti-authoritarian gesture. Clearly, the queen's willful abandonment of her children in the interests of economic solvency belies the romanticizing of motherhood as expressed by male theoreticians and moralists. In this tale, the "little state" or family is incompatible with destitution and powerless to compete against the ignoble instinct of self-preservation. Our *conteuse* seems to delight in transposing the salon's own reputation as a bastion against family pressures to her own fairy-tale world. Dramatically opposed to the wealth that endangers Perrault's own families, misfortune and loss forever stalk the royal household in Aulnoy. And while in Perrault's tales, the unfolding drama is often situated within the family itself, Aulnoy's tales elect the perhaps more neutral space of exile as a testing ground for experimenting with novel alternatives.

Yet, as demonstrably indicated by the amalgamated title "Finette Cendron," innovative tendencies are still embedded in the very traditional forms that inspired them. In this instance, "Cendron," the royal marriage story, is gradually embedded in "Finette," the astute rescuer tale, until all "Finette" motifs are eliminated in the last third of the tale. The exiled queen of the preliminary story and the Finette of the first half of the tale represent the active heroine. Following in the footsteps of her industrious though perhaps insensitive mother, Finette navigates dangerous routes and even murders an ogress. On the other hand, Cendron, as Finette is christened in the second half of the tale, embodies the established order. This diegetic interlacing of active and passive female character translates a conflict between individual initiative and social conformity.

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[44] Dällenbach, *Le Récit spéculaire*, 125.

A structural resolution of ambivalence, embedding one persona in another can be related to the contradictions that defined aristocratic identity, which adhered to the ideology of lineage at one and the same time that it espoused individual ambition and rejected the past.[45] Although the Finette component of the heroine Finette Cendron achieves active status, her activity is progressively limited to reintegrating herself and her sisters into the royal domain. The unconventional Finette's transformation into the more compliant Cendron is framed by a ball scene reminiscent of *La Princesse de Clèves*: "Dès qu'elle parut dans l'assemblée, il s'éleva un murmure de voix, les unes d'admiration, les autres de jalousie" (495). As soon as Finette arrives at the prince's ball, she is appropriated by the court, whose authorial function is suggested by her christening as "Cendron." Society's depersonalization of Finette is marked by her transformation into the poetic formulae of the era—"blanche comme la neige, plus vermeille que les roses" (496)—and consolidated by her "robe qui pèse plus de mille livres" (496). This sartorial metaphor for the weight of social conformity exacted by the court society implies that the socialization process undergone by Finette reverses the liberation experienced by the mother of Chatte Blanche, freed from her "robe fort pesante & fort dure."

Finette's transformation into Cendron, a kind of reverse metamorphosis, is finalized by the red velvet slipper which synecdochically replaces her in the eyes of the prince: "il la regarde, en admire la petitesse et la gentilesse, la tourne, retourne, la baise, la chérit, et l'emporte avec lui" (497). Foregrounding the fetishism that subtly but forcefully imbues Perrault's "Cinderella," Aulnoy's own pearl-embroidered red velvet slipper monopolizes the last seven pages of her tale, where it is conspicuously highlighted for a grand total of twenty-one times. Yet, paradoxically, this insistent focus on the immobile object only amplifies the movement of the text, since it invites the reader to measure the distance from the restless Finette to the nearly-settled Cendron, as traced by the adjective "mignon."

The first occurrence of the epithet "mignon" describes the peripatetic Finette by focusing on a part of her body, "ses petits pieds *mignons*" (473); the second instance depicts the object from the prince's perspective, "cette petite pouponne *mignonne*, jolie mule" (498); and the last example designates Finette herself, whom the prince's queen mother refers to as "ma *mignonne*" (501). This final occurrence of "mignon" as a substantive marks the transfer of attention from the body (foot) to the object (slipper), while ultimately implying Finette's assimilation with the latter. The insistent emphasis on the lovesick prince's flirtation with fetishism contributes to the sense of irresolvable conflict that infuses this most mobile of texts. Fetishism, says Freud, comes into play when "throne and altar are in danger."[46] According to Freud, the fetish represents a degree of mastery in the face of threatened sexual identity. Surely, in light of the profound social changes marking seventeenth-century France, the sexual identity of upper-class males was in crisis. No longer assured that the prerogatives of noble male privilege would be theirs, even a semblance of control could be comforting. Although the fetishistic pearl-embossed shoe appears to foreshadow the heroine's decline from active status, this change of state is ambivalently framed by three pages of onomastic juggling where she is alternately referred to as "Finette," "Finette Cendron," "Cendrillon," and "Cendron." An eloquent reflection on the contingent nature of the self, this play upon the heroine's various incarnations bespeaks a resistant ambivalence on the part of the narrator. In stark contrast to Perrault's "Cendrillon," Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" underscores the process undergone when an individual evolves from self-assertiveness to compliant conformity or vice versa.

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[45] See Dewald, 7.

Unlike the Perraldian equivalent, Aulnoy's text depicts the very operation of reification, while inscribing in its unfolding a powerful resistance. For the "robe qui pèse plus de mille livres," synonymous with Cendron's social reintegration, is challenged by Finette's anterior individualism ; one might even conclude that the gown's burdensome weight varies in direct proportion to the transformed heroine's shifting memories of her former state. For all intents and purposes, the reverse metamorphosis, so rare in Aulnoy's tales, is enacted with many reservations on the part of the undecided narrator.[47] Ambivalence is clearly indicated by the narrator's disrespect for the proper name, which in and of itself suggests a rejection of the closure implied by the concluding royal marriage. Indeed, Cendron herself is not easily rid of the vestiges of her former self. As a case in point, the energetic heroine ventures out on a dashing white horse, avenges herself on the hateful sisters by splashing their garments with mud, tries on the velvet slipper, and forthwith cures the dying prince. Upon being asked to wed the hero, Cendron flatly refuses until her prospective royal in-laws agree to honor the two conditions that she has set: first, they must listen to her story disclosing her true identity, second, they must render unto her father the states he has lost.

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[46] Freud, "Fetishism" in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, 205.

[47] In the matter of metamorphosis, it is most interesting that Perrault never transforms humans into beasts. His are only ascending metamorphoses, whether from lowly object into cultural artifact or from uncultivated human to a polished representative of cultural progress.

Clearly, Cendron is not so easily rid of Finette. As for the reader, aided by the mnemonic play on Finette Cendron's shifting identities, (s)he witnesses the dynamics of textual production. Caught in the alternating movement between "Finette," "Finette Cendron," "Cendrillon," and "Cendron," the reader recalls the narrator's revision of folklore implied in the title, the queen's invention of new social roles for herself and the king, and court society's socialization of Finette. Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" amplifies textual space to accommodate ambivalence, creates a forum for exploring interlocking identities, and invents a stage for emerging women writers.

FORMAL CONVENTIONS

In opposition to the self-in-process articulated by Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron," the characters in Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" and "Cendrillon" are presented as abstract moral examples whose identity is at once assured and predetermined by the moral of the form.[48] As early as the opening paragraph of "Cendrillon," characters are affixed to either pole of what might be described as an antithetical house, which appears literally divided between the gentleness and fine qualities of a father and his daughter and the haughtiness and bad humor of a stepmother and her own daughters. This initial characterological symmetry is maintained by a linear development that guarantees its rhetorical effectiveness. Linearity can indeed be understood as a given of parallel contrast or antithesis, which furthermore presumes that narrator and reader agree on the general terms that validate the opposition. Any break in narrative line destabilizes antitheses and the value-inscribed general terms subtending them. According to the criteria established by Gérard Genette's "Vraisemblance et motivation," Perrault's is clearly a "plausible text," meaning one grounded in an implicit social code shared by narrator and reader alike. Since this largely unspoken code accounts for action, narrator commentary, while not absent, gives the appearance of being minimal.[49]

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[48] See Robert's discussion of Perrault's symmetrical style, which serves to globally valorize or devalue characters (435).

Critics agree that Perrault's tales were written for his fellow members of the French Academy. "Le Petit Poucet"[50] can indeed be read as a manifesto for the modernist cause he championed. Marc Soriano, Jeanne Morgan, and most recently Philip Lewis, have indicated how Perrault's role in the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns influenced the writing of his tales.[51] The last volume of his *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes*, which argued that modern works were equal to those of antiquity, was published in the same year as the *Contes du temps passé*. Disdained by his family which mistakes intelligence for stupidity, the diminutive Poucet sets out to prove his worth and succeeds in enriching the males in his family through the purchase of offices. The moral of this tale which warns against deceptive appearances has implications for the literary status of the fairy tales: what may appear inferior is in reality superior, since the tales artfully and imperceptibly convey a moral message.[52]

Included in this modern moral lesson, so "natural" to the all-male Academy audience as to be imperceptible, one finds the same opposition between male intelligence and female corporeality seen in "Riquet à la houppe." In Perrault's negative version of the engendering female so esteemed by Poullain and Le Moyne, the maternal figure, tainted by excessive fecundity, proves to be the agent of poverty: "On s'étonnera que le Bûcheron ait eu tant d'enfants en si peu de temps; mais c'est que sa femme allait vite en besogne, et n'en faisait moins que deux à la fois" (63). As we have seen in the second chapter, Sleeping Beauty's stepmother and Bluebeard's financially savvy wife are among those of Perrault's women who venture beyond the conventional roles of mothering. However, even they do not avoid the misogynist commonplaces which have their source in both folklore and the pre-seventeenth-century version of the literary *Querelle des femmes*. This venerable tradition dictates that Poucet's marvelous seven-league boots be at once the antithesis of Cinderella's glass slippers and the logical extension of male intelligence, "le principe de mouvement."

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[49] Genette, *Figures II*, 71-99.

[50] In Collinet, 191-200.

[51] Soriano, 294-317; Morgan, 7-34; Lewis, 9-78.

[52] The link between "Le Petit Poucet" and the third volume of the *Parallèle* is thus expressed: "Ceux qui ont fait des Contes de Peau d'Ane [donnent aux ogres] ordinairement des bottes de sept lieues, pour courir après ceux qui s'enfuient. Il y a quelque esprit dans cette imagination" (117-18). Quoted by Collinet, 346, note 29.

For all the complexity of Perrault's classic narratives, their delineation of female identities is frequently retrograde for the times. This can, of course, be understood as a complicitous wink in the direction of the French folkloric heritage which Perrault was conscious of claiming for the developing French state. Although challenged at every turn by a band of assorted female characters, this legacy detrimental to women proves powerfully resistant to change. In many cases, conventional masculine and feminine identities, together with the hierarchy they imply, find their way into the *Contes du temps passé* through the guise of symmetrical antitheses that seductively enhance the pleasure of the reading experience.[53]

THE MIRROR OF NATURE

Aulnoy's sixty-one page version of tale type 403, "La Biche au bois," outnumbers by nearly fifty pages Jean de Mailly's rendition, "Blanche Belle." It is likely that Fénelon would have attributed such prolixity to women's deficient logic and excessive imagination:

> Le bon esprit consiste à retrancher tout discours inutile, et à dire beaucoup en peu de mots; au lieu que la plupart des femmes disent peu en beaucoup de paroles. Elles prennent la facilité de parler et la vivacité de l'imagination pour l'esprit; elles n'y mettent aucun ordre par rapport aux choses qu'elles ont à expliquer; elles sont passionnées sur presque tout ce qu'elles disent et la passion fait parler beaucoup.[54]

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[53] Elisabeth Berg has analyzed Perrault's preoccupation with hierarchy in his *Apologie des femmes*, which pits submissive women against their aggressive counterparts as imagined in Boileau's tenth satire. Berg identifies the dogmatic tendencies in Perrault's thought together with what she sees as a penchant for absolute truths. According to Berg, Perrault asserted the "absolute superiority" of the modernist cause, whereas Boileau's defense of the ancients was less categorical (143-44).

[54] Fénelon, 146.

Fénelon's critique unwittingly enumerates certain defining characteristics of "l'art de Férie," as the *conteuse* Henriette de Murat designated women's fairy-tale writing. Nonetheless, the good archbishop fails to examine the expressive utility of these properties.

For one, the amplified length he so laments might be seen as a requisite to the magnificent châteaux that proliferate in the tales as so many sites of desire and power.[55] "Chatte Blanche"'s château of fairy-tale writing is but one of many palatial abodes that abound in women's narratives. Ubiquitous as they are, these exquisite imaginary castles inscribe Versailles motifs in a manner befitting a panegyric, yet this transcription conceals a potentially seditious textual maneuver.[56] If one were to define this strategy, conform and dissent is perhaps an apt description: the profusion of precious jewels, marble and mirrors that typify the *conteuses'* fairy-tale palaces are at once a complicitous gesture in the direction of the monarchy and a means of valorizing the narratives themselves together with their creators. More often than not, Versailles luxury is appropriated and the monarchy flattered, in order to provide a political power base from which to challenge authority. As Fénelon divined, the length of women's tales is related to imagination and passion, since these glittering châteaux are imbued with an affective dimension that in itself inspired the very act of writing.

"La Biche au bois" clarifies the link between passion and writerly invention when the fairies, responding to the queen's prayers for a child, lead her royal majesty to their sensuous castle in which her desires will soon be fulfilled. As the queen enters the fairy palace, the text focuses on the artistic problems of representation. Replying to the queen's query as to whether she is awake or dreaming, the fairies teasingly respond: "Rien n'est plus réel" (351). Their suggestive reply invites readers to direct their attention to a series of second-degree representations including tapestries and portraits, which forthwith saturate the text. Serving to awaken the reader's awareness of the processes of textual composition, these works of art presage the *mise en abyme* of the enunciatory situation in the last third of the tale. At the same time, they insinuate the reader into the world of Le Brun and other pensioned artists, who gave pictoral form to Louis XIV's accomplishments.[57] Politics infuses the fairies' domain through descriptions whose enumerations at once hyperbolize Versailles' magnificence and deflect attention from the linear narrative. One might say that the fairies' "Rien n'est plus réel" refers to the tale's transcription of contemporary reality, an inscription that amplifies the narrative by blending in equal measures "Il était une fois" and the Sun King's enchanted realm.

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[55] Michèle Longino interprets the length of Sévigné's text as expressive of pleasure or "jouissance." Prolixity is associated with "fetishizing the mother's textual body." *Performing Motherhood*, 123-25.

[56] On the relationship between fairy tales and the monarchy, see Apostolidès, *Le Roi machine*, 141 and Robert, 225-30.

Constructed by the flick of a magic wand, these diamond and emerald-studded palaces can be understood as metaphors for the *salonnières*' fairy-tale writing. The enchanted castle imagined to shelter the queen's daughter, Désirée, is emblematic of those that proliferate in women's tales:

> Trois coups de baguette commencèrent & finirent ce grand édifice. Il étoit de marbre blanc, & vert par dehors; les plafonds & les planchers de diamants & d'émeraudes qui formoient des fleurs, des oiseaux & mille choses agréables. (358)

This château extends across textual space to include both the typical panegyric—Désirée is twice compared to Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy, who married the Duke of Burgundy in 1697—and a showcase for the fairies' talents. It would even appear that the fairies, "savantes dans l'histoire," can be counted among the king's royal historiographers, since they weave a tapestry depicting "les actions héroiques du plus grand roi du monde" (358-59). The reader, who perceives two levels of representation, the diegesis itself and the described tapestry, is made aware of multiple degrees of composition as (s)he glimpses the hand of the narrator behind the fairies' artistry. Indeed, the seventeenth-century rhetorician Carel de Sainte-Garde referred precisely to an embedded tapestry description to explain his doctrine of mimesis: "Car un Poëte qui décrira les portraits figurez dans une tapisserie, doit obliger ceux à qui il parle de syllogiser, & de comparer les traits de sa plume avec les traits de l'aiguille ou du pinceau."[58] As described by Sainte-Garde, the reader's deciphering activity demystifies the fictional illusion while situating him or her at a critical distance from the story being recounted.

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[57] See Faith Beasley, *Revising Memory*, 10. Royal tapestries at Versailles expressed absolutist goals by appropriating history through mythical images. The artist Le Brun executed a series entitled "L'Histoire du roy."

[58] Sainte-Garde, *Réflexions académiques sur les orateurs et sur les poètes* (Paris: C. Remy, 1676), 143. Cited by Lyons, *The Listening Voice: An Essay on the Rhetoric of Saint-Amant*, 107. For a precise description of the reader's deciphering activity when (s)he is presented with two levels of representation, see Lyons, 107.

Further eliciting the reader's decoding efforts, two portraits of the heroine and the hero Prince Guerrier, both examples of second-degree representation, proliferate throughout the length of the story. These portraits, reiterated a total of nineteen times, at once inscribe and critique the conventions of gallant and *précieux* expression. For the greater part of the tale, the narrator focuses on the dangers of illusory sensual experience by numerous references to the prince's endangered mental and physical health. Prince Guerrier, who has become enamored of Désirée's portrait while she is still confined for her own protection in the magical château, retires in solitude to his *cabinet*, where he spends long hours conversing with the portrait "comme s'il eût été sensible" (361). The narrator ridicules the deluded prince, whose fantasy consists in composing love letters which he then offers to the portrait, "comme s'il eût été capable de les lire" (369). Like many a *précieux* hero or *tendre* lover, the prince is imprisoned in a world of illusion with no recourse but to pine away for an idealized absence. The heroine too, impressed by the portrait that she has received from the hero, willingly risks her welfare to encounter its likeness. Nevertheless, the sophisticated seventeenth-century reader would have little difficulty in detecting the mechanical properties of the prince's talking portrait, whose mastery of the gallant and *tendre* codes—"lui fit un compliment aussi tendre que galant" (146)—seems a mere formal exercise. More precisely, we learn that this royal portrait, a kind of automaton, possesses solely the ability to parrot set phrases and is incapable of responding to its interlocutor. The communicative value of the amorous expression of the time would appear slim indeed.

The problematics of representation embodied in the tapestry descriptions and the portraits is further elaborated in the last third of the tale, which proposes an alternative to the codified expression of affectivity found in the era's novels. Portraits, omnipresent in works of fiction as well as in the works of moralists such as La Bruyère, stress abstract personal qualities of mind and soul, while neglecting the somatic dimension. However, the remarkable prolixity of "La Biche au bois" enables it to encompass such conventional forms of expression while at the same time suggesting perhaps preferable alternatives. Realistic Versailles-like descriptions, as found in the first two-thirds of the tale, give way to the more innovative depictions of the last third, which recounts the adventures of Désirée's transformation into a doe. As Fénelon asserted, women are "nées artificieuses, et . . . usent de longs détours pour venir à leur but" (146). Pursuant to this logic, the first part of the text, expanded to accommodate both the required bow to the status quo and the initiation of narrative practices meant to challenge its authority, can be considered a "pre-text" to the last third. For this ultimate sequence of the tale stages the narrator's coming to writing, a process that is coincidental with a reawakening to sensuality.[59]

"Elle pleura en Biche désolée, lorsqu'elle vit sa figure dans une fontaine qui lui servoit de miroir" (384). The heroine's transformation into a doe substitutes the mirror of nature for the reified portraits that at first dominate the tale. In Jean-Marie Apostolidès' words "Le courtisan se construit comme un château, tout en façade."[60] At the very moment when the courtier's body disappears beneath the weight of elaborate garments and the protocol of *bienséance*, the aptly-named Désirée abandons Finette Cendron's "robe qui pèse plus de mille livres" and opts instead to emulate Chatte Blanche's mother and Constancia. However, the narrator's carefully contrived disposition of this final episode reveals that Désirée's "liberation" is fraught with ambivalence. Resembling the metamorphosed Mama, Marcassin, and Serpentin Vert, Désirée's identity alternates according to a diurnal-nocturnal dichotomy. By day, the heroine lives as a doe pursued by the hunting Guerrier, whereas by night she assumes womanly form to recount her adventures to Giroflée, her confidant. The vacillation between doe and woman, forest and chamber, is orchestrated by a corresponding alternation between gesture language and *précieux* or gallant expression. Rotating multiple perspectives are compounded by the diegetic coincidence that the hero and heroine retire nightly to the same cabin whose two rooms are separated only by a partition. In consequence, Désirée's recounting is juxtaposed to Guerrier's own version. The narrator, moving from one side of the divider to the other, reveals that men and women tell the same story differently.

"Elles n'y mettent aucun ordre par rapport aux choses qu'elles ont à expliquer," quipped Fénelon. In truth, the heroine's analeptic narrations to her confidant distort chronology, yet they do so in order to provide a dramatic site for highlighting the narrator's own appropriation of her work.

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[59] See Barchilon, 43-44, for a psychological interpretation of the metamorphosis and its link to sensual expression.

[60] *Le Roi machine*, 52.

Moreover, the very tampering with linearity opens a breach in the story and thus prepares the reader for this extra-diegetic event. Désireé, who has just returned to the cabin after dodging the unwitting Guerrier's arrows, is entreated by Giroflée to avoid the dangerous forest:

> Il ne faut plus sortir . . . passez dans cette chambre le tems fatal de votre pénitence, j'irai dans la ville la plus proche acheter des livres pour vous divertir, nous lirons des *contes nouveaux* que l'on a faits sur les fées. (392-93, emphasis added).

Referring to "contes nouveaux," the elliptical title of *Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode* (the collection that includes "La Biche au bois"), Aulnoy signs this *mise en abyme*, which reflects the reader's own reception of the tale. As Dällenbach has shown, such mirroring of the situation of enunciation inscribes the work of the empirical writer and reader in the text. Indeed, the storyteller Désirée's seclusion in the forest corresponds with Aulnoy's own forced retreat to a Parisian convent where she may have composed part of her works. This dramatic signature enables the writer to claim authorship of her work, signed only Mme. D . . . on the title page. Moreover, because this implicit appropriation of authorial identity is infused with the explicit sensuality of the hunt scenes, Aulnoy symbolically establishes her copyright on what was for the era a new form of amorous expression. Thus does the mirror of writing intersect with the mirror of nature, the fountain in which Désirée first glimpses her metamorphosed self.

Aulnoy's nearly identical textual signing of "Le Pigeon et la Colombe" links this latter tale to "La Biche au bois," both of which explore a fledgling eroticism. As the lovely doe approaches the napping hero, her touch initiates him into the pleasures of sensuality: "elle le touchoit lorsqu'il s'éveilla" (394-95). From this point onward, the prince's pursuit of the beautiful but frightened animal includes caresses, a bed of roses and a symbolic sexual possession.[61] The hunt scenes clearly signify the author's attempt to narrate the body excluded from the era's conventional modes of amatory expression. To illustrate this point, the heroine herself claims to be unsatisfied with the portrait's mere semblance of her lover's beauty. Glimpsing sight of Guerrier for the first time during the course of the initial hunting episode, Désirée exclaims to Giroflée: "ah que le portrait qu'on m'apporta est peu fidelle; il est cent fois mieux fait . . ." (397).[62]

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[61] First, it is reported that the hero has wounded the doe's leg (399). Later, as the prince is spying on Désirée through the partition, her arm as opposed to her leg is described as wounded: "Elles [Giroflée and Désirée] paroissoient toutes deux embarrassées de cette blessure" (403). The textual confusion here signals the underlying sexual connotations of the scene.

This critique of the hero's likeness is simultaneously an unfavorable appraisal of the century's gallant and *précieux* traditions, of which the portrait is a manifestation. The prince's confidant too, underscores the heroine's negative evaluation of this essential component of gallant protocol when he bores a hole through the separating partition and discovers the beautiful princess. He then invites the hero to gaze upon his beloved: "vous verrez l'original du portrait qui vous a *charmé*," he reassures the prince (403, emphasis added). Aulnoy's cultivated reader would have little difficulty in discerning the negative connotations of "charmé," which could designate that which was bewitched, often by a malevolent force.[63] By substituting corporal reality for the fantasies inspired by the portrait, the prince recovers from his psychosomatic illness. When placed in the context of Aulnoy's global disparagement of illusion-prone heroes, Guerrier's prior correspondence with the inanimate portrait is but the derisive mark of his regrettable gullibility. Aulnoy is uncomfortable with self-delusion, whatever be its form.

Yet, although the discrepancies that manifest themselves through the alternation of hunt (body discourse) and recital scenes (*précieux* or gallant discourse) invite criticism of the prevailing forms of amorous communication, the juxtaposition of these codes of expression remains somewhat ambiguous. In the final analysis, ambivalence is one of the hallmarks of women's fairy-tale narratives. Ambiguity, a device at once self-defensive and empowering, transposes textually into the amplification necessary for the coexistence of dissent and conformity. This same magnifying dimension, together with its propensity to unsettle linearity, aids the narrator in exposing the secrets of textual composition while exhibiting her own artistic identity. The heroine's passage to eloquence via the metamorphosed body is concluded by her foray into autobiography. Upon resuming human form, Désirée, like other Aulnoy heroines, recites her story to a now captive Guerrier: "au même moment elle commença le récit de son histoire" (405).

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[62] Seifert discusses the "disruptive effect" of the portraits in this tale and concludes that the dissemblance between the likeness and the original highlights the status of representation in the text. "Representation is decidedly secondary, if not inferior to ontological presence." *FTSG*, 168-69.

[63] Pierre Dumonceaux traces the evolution of "charmé" in *Langue et sensibilité au XVIIe siècle: l'évolution du vocabulaire affectif*, 109-79. Other references to the prince's "idées charmantes" can be found on 38; 383; 394.

GALLANT ILLUSIONS

"Blanche Belle," Jean de Mailly's cynically gallant version of this story, claims to illustrate a maxim inscribed at the tale's center, and therefore appears to subscribe to the theoretician Le Bossu's notion that the moral intention both precedes and determines the work of art. Although "Blanche Belle" narrativizes an adage and explains character behavior according to conventional generalities, it also offers an unorthodox lesson in female ingenuity by inventing a childless marquise who successfully appropriates the traditional literary heritage to accommodate her own desires. "Blanche Belle"'s disrespectful irony appears to be directed equally at the aristocratic men and women who compose Mailly's courtly audience.

In lieu of fleeing to a sensuous château in the Aulnoy tradition, Mailly's noble heroine pursues a more traditional route for realizing her goals. Rather than appeal to the fairies' magic, this marquise prefers instead to consult a gallant version of the ancient legend of Romulus, whose birth was said to have resulted from his mother's conversation with a sylph. Robert has observed that this reference to antiquity was very likely mediated by Mailly's recourse to the Abbé de Villars' 1670 *Le Comte de Gabalis ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes*. In this bestseller, Villars vulgarized cabalistic theories which explained the birth of the great men of antiquity and of the Bible. Adapting the legend to his own gallant perspective, Villars' version is rife with ironic and suggestive portrayals of love between supernatural beings and mortals.[64]

Paying little heed to the Sieur de Mainville's assertion that "le mauvais ménage de la femme est beaucoup plus pernicieux que la débauche de son mari,"[65] the marquise benefits from Villars' gallant fantasies to fulfill her own desires. Indeed, the heroine's solution to the "shame" of her childlessness identifies her as a participant in the tradition of gallant skepticism which defined the official culture of court society until around 1680.[66] Having heard the Romulus story, the noblewoman retires to her *cabinet* in order to "dream" that she has spent the night with a sylph: "elle s'endormit, & fut occupée durant son sommeil d'un songe qui lui fit fort grand plaisir" (1). The birth of Blanche Belle nine months later can testify either to the power of imagination or to the gullibility of the marquis. Unfortunately, the nobleman is cuckolded, whether the culprit be a literary illusion or an adroit rival. The marquise's active "imagination" has doubtless been nourished by the culture of the court society, which promoted a certain measure of sexual independence at one and the same time that it stressed the importance of lineage. Indeed, the aristocratic preoccupation with the purity of bloodlines is expressed in the body of the tale.

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[64] Robert, 181-86. According to Robert, Mailly likely profited from Villars' text in order to gentrify an explicitly sexual scene in the sixteenth-century version of this tale authored by Straparola, which probably served as Mailly's model. Straparola's heroine is impregnated by a salamander, whereas Mailly's marquise has a conversation with a sylph.

[65] Mainville, *Du Bonheur et du malheur dans le mariage*, 96.

Despite several sardonic asides to the reader, this classic text's coherency depends on a maxim which explicitly warns against women's vengeance, yet implicitly, and more importantly, alludes to the fatal consequences of misalliance. Blanche Belle's beauty, enhanced by her gift for producing pearls and rubies, wins the love of King Fernandin, who had formerly promised to wed his stepsister: "Le roi devoit avoir jugé . . . qu'une dame abandonnée pour une autre pardonne rarement" (5-6). Because the king has defaulted on a family contract, his beloved Blanche is temporarily imprisoned and, dire consequence indeed, his mother and stepsister are exiled. The king's gallantry, though based on genuine emotion, threatens hierarchy and destroys the royal family. Mailly's tale explores the contradictions inherent in aristocratic identity, based at once on family heritage and the culture of civility that undermined that family. "Blanche Belle" is in part a pessimistic indictment of aristocratic mores. Clearly, the affective dimension highlighted in the tales of Aulnoy and Bernard is here disclosed as the source of familial ruin. Furthermore, since the family in question involves the royal household, its destruction foretells that of the State with which it was assimilated.

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[66] Pelous, 428.

FAIRY-TALE AESTHETICS

The unsettling of the body's boundary lines characteristic of Aulnoy's metamorphosis narratives is reflected in other women's tales; however, the majority of the latter elect the more subtle mechanism of disguise. The transvestitism prevalent in *L'Astrée* and characteristic of the *femme forte* who dominated heroic novels of the early century, is the elected disguise of women's fairy-tale heroines.[67] Moreover, this exploration of the limits of the gendered body is accompanied by an experimenting with the boundaries of the narrative: in women's tales, both the body of the heroine and that of the text are characterized by their movement. For just as propelling the body into motion through metamorphosis and disguise questions traditional notions of female identity such as those found in the treatises on women, so too does endowing the text with movement both evade and disturb the poetics of classicism elaborated by the theoreticians of Louis XIV's French Academy; exploring generic limits displaces the literary hierarchies that are enmeshed in state politics. Nonetheless, one should be mindful that the characteristic fluidity of women's tales involves more than a mere evasion of the established order, which is not unambiguously rejected. It should likewise be noted that these texts, appearing at times to put meaning itself in flight, express more than the "esthetics of negligence," which the *conteuses* so persistently and so predictably proclaim in their metacommentaries on the genre. As a group, and within the context of the men's contemporaneous versions, women's narratives reveal certain continuities of structure which suggest the deliberate hand of the storyteller.

In the same way that the metamorphosed and disguised body may be considered a theater for exploring the contingent self, the fairy tale can be conceived of as a theater for the staging of a female identity opposed to those offered in tracts on the nature of women. Textual analysis discloses that the much censored amplifications of the women's tales both contribute to and are a consequence of their characteristic self-reflexive properties. When compared to men's tales, the women's distinguish themselves by a remarkable degree of self-consciousness as articulated through their overwhelming predilection for the *mise en abyme*, in particular, of the situation of enunciation. The *conteuses* insistently mirror and consequently underscore the dynamics of textual production by inscribing the writer, the reader, and the context or situation of literary creation and reception in their narratives. Although textual reflexivity may not be considered the exclusive property of any one work or group thereof, it emphatically marks women's as opposed to men's tales. If indeed we agree with Apostolidès that the Petite Académie staged the mise-en-scène of the king's symbolic body,[68] we can perhaps conceive of the fairy tales as effecting a mise-en-scene of the symbolic body of the *salonnières*. At one and the same time that the Petite Académie, including Chapelain and Perrault, undertakes a celebratory medallic history of the king, salon women construct a symbolic self through a body of tales that glorify women writers. Seventeenth-century France becomes conscious of its destiny as a nation through the construction of the king's symbolic body, and, within this state so intimately linked to the French Academy, salon women stake out their place in the Republic of Letters by writing fairy tales.

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[67] See Maurice Magendie, *Le Roman français au XVII siècle*, 47-48. Magendie enumerates the many hunting and fighting heroines disguised as men. See also DeJean's comments, 24.

Linda Hutcheon has observed that the "narcissistic narrative," one that alludes to its own production, by definition challenges the suppression of the textual producer.[69] Moreover, according to Lucien Dällenbach, the *mise en abyme* of the enunciation, included in Hutcheon's "modes of textual narcissism"(4), goes one step further and seeks to integrate the empirical author and reader, who by definition are excluded from the story.[70] Therefore, the mirroring of the circumstances of narrative production is an eminently spectacular textual site where the fairy tale stages the coming to writing of salon women in a manner that recalls a dramatic performance. Indeed, one can link this theatrics of writerly identity to the close alliance between the theater and the baroque. Rousset asserts that in baroque literature, which is at once "l'oeuvre et la création de cette oeuvre," the spectator (or the reader) both collaborates in and is a witness to, the act of creation.[71] The theatrical quality of baroque literature can be understood as parallel to the *mise en abyme* of narrative production, which Dällenbach defines moreover as a "mise en spectacle" (100). One is thus entitled to speak of the exhibitionist quality of women's tale writing, which clearly pays little heed to the "Rhétorique tacite" and the "éloquence muette" that delimit the confines of female expression according to Lescale.[72] On the contrary, these reflexive narratives, like the *mise en spectacle* described by Dällenbach, "rendent l'invisible [the act of creation] visible" (100). The *conteuses*' narratives supplement the elliptical or semi-anonymous signature of the title page of the fairy-tale collection, with a dramatic interior signing that says "I, the author."[73]

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[68] See Apostolidès, 7; 26-28.

[69] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, xv.

[70] Dällenbach, 105. Quoting Dällenbach, "les mises en abyme du travail producteur sont le fait des récits soucieux de mirer sans cesse l'aventure de leur propre génération," 102.

[71] Rousset, 232. Rousset notes "la collaboration demandée au spectateur . . . qu'on introduit dans le mouvement d'une oeuvre qui paraît se faire en même temps qu'il la connaît; marque supplémentaire de l'intime alliance nouée entre le baroque et le théâtre."

The doubling accomplished by the *conteuses'* mirroring of the act of writing contributes to the length of their tales, whose amplifications also include the already mentioned disguise and metamorphosis along with addresses to the reader. The latter assume the form of contemporaneous social allusions and metanarrative conversation. Taken together, such textual properties enable us to define globally the *salonnières'* style as a writing by addition whose demystifying elements can be associated with those of the above discussed *mise en abyme*. Described by Bal as a "troublemaker," a figure that at once disrupts linearity and disturbs chronology, the "mirror in the text" is not unrelated to those other forms of amplification such as addresses to the reader and metamorphosis or disguise.[74] Such extensions of the narrative share with the analogic *mise en abyme* the capacity to detemporalize the story through an enlarging akin to Gérard Genette's figure of "paralepsis," defined as an excess of information, as "giving information that should be left aside."[75] In this instance, the added information, be it the doubling of the writing process (*mise en abyme*), that of character (disguise and metamorphosis), or that of time frame (metanarrative addresses and contemporaneous allusions), alerts the reader to the composing of the story, and as a result, tampers with the linearity necessary for coherent seamless diegesis.

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[72] Lescale, *Alphabet de l'excellence et perfection des femmes*, 84. See also ch. I.

[73] Lewis Seifert interprets the elliptical signature typical of the *conteuses*' narratives as expressive of a collective identity. Because women suppressed proper names but retained "gendered civility titles," they desire recognition in the public arena as a group of elite women. See "Les Fées modernes," in Goodman and Goldsmith's *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*.

[74] Bal, 87.

[75] Genette, 211-13. Storer, referring to the "unnecessary" length of Murat's tales, regrets that this amplifying serves to "rompre souvent l'illusion de la féerie" (154).

Far from being gratuitous, the substantial length of women's tales creates a potentially disruptive space for inventing writerly identity while exploring the limits of both body and text. Challenging convention, such experimentation is often accomplished through conflation of polarities such as those opposing animal to human (metamorphosis), woman to man (disguise), or body to soul/mind. In addition to flaunting the principle of hierarchy which was assuming increasing importance in both literary and family politics, the oxymoronic properties of women's tales create a site for ambivalence befitting these aristocratic women whose privileged status was enshrined in a system that was becoming ever more oppressive. The *conteuses'* heroines are at once active and passive, their tales simultaneously conformist and subversive. All the while amplifying the text, the fusion of opposites sets the text in motion between the narrative and a disclosure of the forces that generate it. Threading between the antithetical barriers meant to assure the cohesiveness of conventional definitions, the blending of opposites has an essentially mobile thrust. The much criticized "superficiality" of women's fairy tales is, in part, attributable to the movement that is one of their most eminent characteristics. These oxymoronic, reflexive texts eschew linearity and the symmetry that maintains it in such a way as to deflect the story and discourage conventional ways of "making sense" of the narrative. And yet, although the meanings of these experimental texts frequently elude the uninitiated reader, acquainted merely with the masterworks of French classicism, they do convey a message that exceeds by far the one usually attributed to them, that is, the gratuitous self-aggrandizement of the elites.

The analogy between women's mobile texts and the baroque authors of the earlier part of the century extends beyond the theatrical quality of fairy-tale narratives discussed above.[76] Resembling the baroque works analyzed by Dalia Judovitz, women's tales unsettle the foundations of literary conventions while simultaneously exploring the boundaries of the self.[77] Indeed, the narrative properties that distinguish women's tales from men's link them to the "baroque feminism" which Ian Maclean has identified as characteristic of feminist didactic literature from 1630 to 1650.[78]

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[76] For a delineation of the baroque time frame for seventeenth-century France, see Rousset, 233; 235.

[77] Judovitz, *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes: The Origins of Modernity*, 25. See also ch. III.

[78] Maclean, 233-265.

Defined as the fusing of contraries and the crossing of polarities that highlight the ambiguities of accepted oppositions, baroque feminism is exemplified by the male-created *femme forte* (255). However, unlike her later fairy-tale counterpart, this exceptional heroine of the era of Anne of Austria owes her existence to an implicit, inferior female model tainted with the ancient prejudices involving women's nature (265). In contrast, and by virtue of the very mobility that defines them, the *conteuses*' inventive heroines are realized as a self-in-process, one whose derivation cannot be assigned to a preexistent model; like the *précieuses*, women's heroines appear to invent themselves as the text progresses.[79] According to Maclean, Louis XIV's assumption of power was accompanied by a return to a moral order based on "an attachment to firm divisions and the rule of common sense" (265). While this may very well apply to the political arena, it surely does not extend to the "little republic" of fairy-tale writing, where, we will recall, "rien n'étoit assorti selon son espèce."[80] If one were to judge from women's fairy tales, one would not entirely agree with Maclean's statement that "The days of baroque feminism were over" (265).

The baroque-fairy tale link can be pursued through Floeck's notion of the "aesthetic of diversity," which he situates at the end of the sixteenth century and relates to the crisis of consciousness brought about by the discovery of the relativity of knowledge.[81] Although this baroque aesthetic was dominant in the first half of the seventeenth century, it coexisted with the classical "aesthetic of unity" and was revived, though only in minor genres, in the last years of the century (232). According to Floeck, the baroque style is linked to the aesthetic of negligence, which since Castiglione was an integral part of aristocratic identity (240). While analysis of women's tales confirms that they are in part characterized by the baroque tendencies described by Floeck and others, the *conteuses*' narratives nonetheless resist the neat ordering afforded by class-determined categories, whether they be the aesthetic of negligence or the nearly indistinguishable aesthetic of diversity. Since these two aesthetic notions are so intimately related to conceptions of noble class consciousness, they tend to obscure the very texts they are meant to illuminate. Their seductive ideological coherency blinds us to the dissonances which are discovered through a relatively more neutral work of contextualized narrative analysis.

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[79] Maclean differentiates the *femme forte*, created by men, from the *précieuse*, created by women. The latter is described as "more heroic, more independent and more active" than her predecessor (119-20).

[80] I am referring to the "petite république" as described in Aulnoy's "Serpentin Vert." See ch. III.

[81] Floeck, 30.

Indeed, the latter often clarifies the ideological hypothesis in question. Floeck contrasts the (bourgeois) classical aesthetic of unity, which he associates with rationality, universality, and analysis, with the (aristocratic) baroque aesthetic, informed by unstable identities, a universe in metamorphosis, and a marked sensual dimension, "descriptivisme" (251). However, such classifications become problematic in the light of women's fairy tales. To illustrate the point, one need only examine Aulnoy's metamorphosis narratives, which give ample evidence of the hedonistic element associated with the baroque. Yet, the sensuality so integral to Aulnoy's narratives does not entirely preclude the analytical element Floeck seems to confine to classic texts. For the sensual descriptions that inform Aulnoy's tales of shape-shifting are accompanied by a shedding of skin (metamorphosis) which can be conceived of as clearing a pathway to the inner self: the self-in-process which typifies these tales represents at the very least a preliminary step in the direction of psychological analysis. The aristocratic Aulnoy's "baroque" writing by addition amplifies the text to express at once the stirrings of personal autonomy and the social imperatives of court and salon.

Any descriptive aesthetics of women's fairy-tale writing would not be complete without examining the much-advertised "closure" of their narratives. According to Vladimir Propp, the *conte merveilleux* is defined by the primacy of events that occur in orderly succession.[82] Elaborating on Propp's definition to include the specifically French fairy tale, Robert elucidates what she christens "l'écriture féerique."[83] According to Robert, the literary tales of the seventeenth-century valorize a heroic couple while focusing on the rectification of an initial misdeed. The final restoration of order results in the closure which delineates the autonomous micro-universe of the fairy tale (36-37). While it is true that the vast majority of all seventeenth-century fairy tales, men's as well as women's, conclude with the traditional marriage that reintegrates the heroine into the kingdom from which she was temporarily exiled, one must qualify this closure as it relates to women's narratives: when the body of the text and that of the heroine are in constant flight, one can at best refer to a merely ironic closure. The latter is consistently undermined from within by a narration that disregards the linearity of Propp's *conte merveilleux* and by a body that is forever changing form. In comparison with the predominant narrative focus on the adventures and discoveries of enforced exile, the obligatory marriage ceremony carries negligible weight in the textual economy.

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[82] Propp, *Morphologie du conte*, 122. Propp's complete definition is as follows: "le conte merveilleux est un récit construit selon la succession régulière des fonctions citées dans leurs différentes formes, avec absence de certaines d'entre elles dans tel récit, et répétition de certaines dans tel autre."

[83] Robert, 33.

Finally, although women's practice of "writing by addition" shows undeniable parallels with the seventeenth-century baroque most prevalent in the beginning and middle years of the century, its demystifying properties are related as well to what René Démoris calls "Le Temps du vertige," extending from 1680 to 1728.[84] During the last twenty years of the seventeenth century and onward through the early eighteenth century, certain fictional works were characterized by a disrespect for the frontiers traditionally separating the various genres (391). As we can see, circumscribing literary styles within rigid time frames is hazardous indeed. Furthermore, as Marie-Thérèse Hipp's study of novels and memoirs published between 1600 and 1700 has demonstrated, a significant number of these works expressed an awareness of the aesthetic problems involved in composition.[85] Such a reflexive dimension relates to the newly valorized notion of *le vrai*, which encouraged writers to explore the dialogue between reality and fiction as well as the variations of subjectivity (389).

Clearly complicitous with the baroque as defined above, the experimental space of women's tales cannot be restricted to its affinities with this anterior mode of expression, which, to all intents and purposes, coexisted alongside the officially preferred classical style. On the contrary, an analysis of the *conteuses*' works lends new weight to the hypothesis that many forms of literary innovation were being explored long before the dawning of the eighteenth century. Storytellers all, Mama, Désirée, and Finette Cendron can be seen as symptoms of the autobiographical impluse to narrate the self. Narcissists all, their creators invent eminently mobile, specular texts that reveal at once the secrets of composition and the contingencies of identity.

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[84] Démoris, *Le Roman à la première personne, du classicisme aux lumières*, 391.

[85] Hipp, 389.

Chapter Five

The Signature: Revising Definitions

THE LITERARY DOMAIN AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN WRITERS

During the seventeenth century, the literary domain began to emerge as a field in its own right separate from erudition and the humanist tradition. From a historical perspective, the classical age marked the break between the *Lettres savantes* and the notion of a specialized sphere involving strictly literary practices. Alain Viala, who situates this cultural transformation between 1635 and 1685, discerns a turning point toward the increasing autonomy of literature around 1650.[1] According to Viala, this decisive moment is linked to the aftermath of the Fronde and catalyzed by several factors including the disappearance through death or exile of great noble patrons such as Condé, the diminished power of the learned *parlementaires*, and the concentration of the nobility in Parisian salon and academic circles. Consequent to these events, the erudite *doctes* loose their traditional power base to the *nouveaux doctes*, conversant in the protocols of the elite society which secures their new authority (283). Stressing the important involvement of the nobility in the emerging but still relative autonomy of the literary sphere, Viala convincingly argues for a rethinking of traditional notions that envision classical literature as a reflection of the rise of the bourgeois class (243, 296).[2]

The founding of official academies, beginning with the French Academy in 1635, served to legitimate the writer's developing persona. Within the confines of the newly established academies, the purists or *nouveaux doctes*, learned men including Chapelain, Rapin, D'Aubignac, and other theoreticians of classical poetics, formed alliances with the monarchy and established literary norms. This at once enhanced the prestige of men of letters and implicated them in a network of multiple loyalties divided between the Academy and the salon, both of which played complementary roles in legitimating authorial identity. Professional writers sought to establish a dialogue with the representatives of linguistic and theoretical authority emanating from the academies as well as with the elite public of the salons who constituted the audience for literary works. Although the notion of the professional author who gains a livelihood from his published works was gradually becoming a reality owing to the institutionalization of the "droits d'auteur," the writer could not subsist without cultivating patronage, *mécénat*, or service, *clientélisme*.[3]

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[1] Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, 291.

[2] It is now largely admitted that the seventeenth-century bourgeoisie was a non-defined, mixed group with no definite class identity. Although the members of this group could boast of greater numbers in comparison with the nobility, the latter remained a model and point of reference for the era. As Viala explains, the important role of the nobility in the literary field cannot be measured solely in numbers. Although merely a quarter of writers are of aristocratic origin, their great prestige as representatives of *honnêteté*, their strong alliances, and their enduring association with money and power, assured their unchallenged influence on the newly emerging literary field.

Despite certain undeniable opportunities created by the emergence of the literary field, absolutism sought to integrate the writer into the state while combating his increasing autonomy. It is significant that the publishing practices of the era, which required that all manuscripts be submitted to the censor, encouraged the artist's duplicity. According to Viala, the writer's often contradictory alliances, to the powers that be and to the *mondains*, could produce a text characterized by double and even triple meanings (297). As Viala notes, such textual layering could in some cases promote innovation and be integrated into the writer's aesthetic (298). However, in the final analysis, the writer of the classical age, who experienced at one and the same time a nascent autonomy and burdensome constraints, enjoyed only imperfectly consecrated status (294-95).[4]

Aristocratic women and their associates were thus publishing fairy tales at a time when the notion of the professional author was gaining acceptance and a certain respectability. Indeed, the phenomenon of women's fairy-tale writing must be put in context with the fact that an unusually high number of French women, for the most part *salonnières*, were publishing novels and other works at this time.[5] Citing Jürgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere, whose authority rested on public opinion rather than on the sovereign, scholars have recently examined the important role played by seventeenth-century salon women in the increasingly public face of literature.[6] In connection with the evolving status of literature as a public phenomenon, Lewis Seifert, following Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the literary field,[7] has argued that the emerging autonomy of literature was accompanied by conflicts such as the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, that sought to define both the field and its participants. As Seifert argues, gender was a major factor in delineating the power bases of literary hierarchy. Perceived as the threat from within, women's new literary prominence was met with efforts to "deprofessionalize and deligitimize" them. Paradoxically, at the very moment when their visibility reached new heights, women's official status in the Republic of Letters was increasingly marginalized. At once tempted by the new prestige of literature yet anxious to retain their privileged status in a tradition whose ideology reserved the literary domain for men, the *conteuses* resolved the conflict by engaging in a "semiprivate, semipublic sphere."[8]

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[3] Erica Harth observes that until 1777, the royal *privilège* was not clearly assigned to the author.

[4] Viala notes that since the nobility, for the most part, regarded literature as a non-professional activity, they hindered the progress of the writer's material autonomy. The official aristocratic notion of writing as a mere pastime did not lead to challenging authority (294).

There is ample evidence that women's encroachment on what was emerging as an important literary and political power base elicited anxiety on the part of a number of men who were competing with their peers to establish a prestigious position for themselves in this newly surfacing cultural hierarchy. A case in point involves a reluctant admirer of the poetry of Mlle. Certain, Monsieur A. B. A., who noted with apprehension that women writers were provoking a natural disaster in which the functions of the sexes would no longer be differentiated. If women persist in composing literature, he mused, men will be forced to devote their talents to needlework: "Au lieu que notre Sexe helas / Sera reduit au Canevas, / Filera par jour sa fusée, / . . . N'aura l'oeil que sur sa famille, / Et travaillera de l'aiguille. / . . . Les Sexes seront confondus, / Vous aurez par tout le dessus."[9] The persistence of the gender hierarchies delineated in the first chapter is not in question. Indelible parameters of the desire for power, the delineation of masculine and feminine space is transferred from the private household domain to the public literary field. However, the relation between women writers and publicity, imbricated in the conflicted rapport between noble ideology and the profession of writing, requires closer scrutiny.

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[5] According to DeJean, women were responsible for 33 percent of all novels published between 1687 and 1699 (*Tender Geographies*, 128). Lewis Seifert has calculated that approximately twice as many women were publishing between 1670 and 1699 as between 1640 and 1669. According to Seifert, there is a "dramatic increase" in the number of women writing in the last two decades of the century ("*Les Fées modernes*: Women, Fairy Tales, and the Literary Field in Late Seventeenth-Century France," *Going Public*, 131). René Démoris asserts that there were twice as many novels written between 1685 and 1709 than between 1660 and 1684. From 1687 onward, women's writings proliferate (*Le Roman à la première personne*, 264).

[6] On the Habermasian public sphere in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Elizabeth Goldsmith and Dena Goodman, *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*. The public sphere is composed of private individuals who come together as a public constituted in opposition to state authority in order to debate political issues (1).

[7] According to Goldsmith and Goodman, the literary sphere is defined as "the system of institutions, practices, and principles of evaluation 'inhabited' by writers. The literary field has always been conceived as a space, but its terrain is unstable, determined by the relative positions occupied by the agents in it" (5).

[8] Seifert, "*Les Fées modernes*," *Going Public*, 129-145.

What has been traditionally described as the nobility's disdain for publication must perhaps be re-evaluated in light of the increasing prestige associated with the literary profession.[10] Certainly, as Viala has argued, the nobility participated in and influenced the literary domain for which it often served as a model. Indeed, Joan DeJean argues that aristocrats of the latter part of the century were cognizant of literature's enhanced status and not reluctant to benefit from it.[11] While it is widely known that much of the writing produced by the nobility remained in manuscript form until the eighteenth century, the social dimension of seventeenth-century aristocratic literature, founded on the circulation and potential correction of manuscripts, could lead to unforeseen public consequences that were often indistinguishable from the impropriety of commercial publication; discovered by an unintended party, even unpublished letters could entail grave risks for the indiscreet author. With regard to published works, noble ideology held that writing for a mass audience involved a desire to please the public, to which the writer was consequently subjected. Therefore, submitting one's work to the printer was demeaning to those of noble birth as well as to the large numbers of bourgeois who adopted aristocratic manners. Yet, despite considerable reservations involving the social and moral dangers associated with writing for the public, aristocratic men and women paid progressively less attention to them. On the contrary, they wrote in vast numbers and were particularly drawn to memoirs, which enabled them to depict the self in printed form. One need only recall the extraordinary vogue of portraits that placed the individual on display for a public that became increasingly more difficult to define.[12]

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[9] "Monsieur A.B.A., Mademoiselle Certain. Sur ses Ouvrages," in *Mlle Certain, Nouvelles poésies*. Quoted in Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*, 231.

[10] See Domna Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art* (96-97), for a discussion of the aristocratic disdain for "serious" writing. As Stanton's analysis makes clear, the notion of art as a "gratuitous game" derives from a venerable heritage. Pascal, St. Evremond, Montaigne, all envisaged *honnête* art as characterized by an ease of expression antinomic to the pedantic tendencies of the erudite.

[11] DeJean, *TG*, 95-96. Referring to *La Princesse de Clèves*, DeJean writes: "Lafayette's novel demonstrates that the aristocrats involved in salon writing were aware that literary production was acquiring greater status in the second half of the seventeenth century; that they intended to share in the increased profits; and that any failure to participate openly in the new system can, like female anonymity, be understood as an attempt to manipulate changing conditions of production from a position of collective strength, rather than as an avoidance of déclassé activity."

To be sure, the complex relation of the nobility to writing and publication is closely associated with the uses of anonymity. According to Soriano, books published in the second part of the seventeenth-century frequently appeared without an author's signature, which would often be included in the Preface or the *privilège*.[13] DeJean too, has observed that regardless of class or gender, the author's signature was not at all common on the title pages of first editions.[14] Clearly, the question of the anonymous signature cannot be understood by contemporary standards. While it is recognized that women writers, ever tainted by the restrictive *pudeur* that essentialized female nature, resorted to anonymity in greater numbers than their male counterparts, both sexes circumvented *bienséance*, either by omitting (partially or entirely) the signature or by strategically placing it within the textual economy.[15]

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[12] I am indebted to Jonathan Dewald's analysis of the complex relation of the nobility to writing and publishing. See *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*, 182-203.

[13] Perrault's prose tales appear without the author's signature, but the *privilège* is issued to Pierre Darmancour, who also signs the dedicatory epistle to Mademoiselle. *Les Contes de Perrault, culture savante and traditions populaires*, 21-22.

[14] DeJean, *TG*, 242, note 6.

[15] On women's as opposed to men's preference for anonymity, see DeJean, *TG*, 96. Faith Beasley's analysis of the question of women's anonymity also stresses women's lessening resistance to being publicly recognized as authors. *Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France*, 51.

In the case of the *conteuses*, elliptical signing, a substitute for anonymity, was often a mere formality which did not conceal the author's identity to the informed reading public.[16] Focusing on the partial signatures preferred by women writers of the fairy tale, Seifert sees evidence of a fundamental ambivalence: elliptical signing translates a conflict between the desire to be known by a large public and the need to preserve one's identity as the member of an exclusive group.[17] A perusal of the title pages of the original editions reveals that Aulnoy signed "Madame D . . . ," Bernard and Lhéritier omitted the signature—although in the original edition of Lhéritier's *Oeuvres meslées*, she is later referred to as "Mademoiselle L'H"—and Murat signed her title page "Madame la Comtesse De . . . ". As regards the *conteurs*, neither Le Noble, Perrault, nor Mailly signed their original title pages; however, Mailly is cited in the privilège as "Sieur De . . . ".[18] Therefore, as regards the authors examined in this study, which include both aristocrats (Aulnoy, Mailly, Murat, Le Noble) and bourgeois (Bernard, Lhéritier, Perrault), men and women, I would conclude with DeJean that the title-page signature in itself relates ambiguous information indeed as to the affirmation or elision of authorial status.[19]

Despite the equivocal signatures, it does not appear that the women writers in question were eager to shun publicity. Clearly, the *conteuses'* modesty was in no way offended when Donneau de Visé's society journal *Le Mercure galant* alluded to them indirectly yet unmistakably, while lavishing praise on their literary endeavors. True, the *Mercure*, that "most influential early French newspaper" credited with inventing a new public audience for literature,[20] often relied on periphrasis to consecrate women fairy-tale writers. Yet, this round-about way of naming nonetheless made its meaning clear to the informed elites, who in turn might spread the word to a larger, curious public anxious to emulate them in every way. As we know, periphrasis was not an uncommon mode of expression in the seventeenth century. By substituting an approximate definition such as "the same person who wrote" for the proper name, the *Mercure* encouraged the literate public to seek information through discussion and even gossip. In this way, the descriptive periphrasis sparked public discussion of literature, albeit on a relatively superficial plane. Such literary guessing games that involved a broader audience in what was once a restricted domain, certainly played a role in the democratizing of literature that was initiated in the seventeenth century.

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[16] My conclusion concurs with that of Timmermans, 223. DeJean's concept of "transparent anonymity" seems to apply to the *conteuses*' tales. See "Lafayette's Ellipses: The Privileges of Anonymity" (PMLA 99, October 1984): 884-902.

[17] "The authors of the elliptically signed texts needed the recognition of the wider public to maintain the exclusivity of their closed group" (*"Les Fées modernes,"* 139). Seifert argues that, in light of the *conteuses*' own allusions to their writing as a group activity, suppressing the proper name yet retaining the civility title "suggest a desire for recognition as a group of women writers" (143-44).

[18] According to Mary Storer, only the first two volumes of Aulnoy's *Contes nouveaux*, which I have consulted at the Bibliothèque nationale, can be found in their original editions. Later editions, the first of which dates from 1710, are signed "Madame D . ". The information here given involving title pages for all authors, with the exception of the above-cited Aulnoy volumes, is based on the original editions.

[19] It should be underscored that all tale writers regardless of class were closely associated with the aristocratic milieu whose approbation in literary matters was essential.

Announcing their successful published works, three separate 1698 issues of the *Mercure* refer to Aulnoy, Bernard and Lhéritier. The entry for Aulnoy consecrates her authorial status: "les *Contes nouveaux, ou Fées à la mode*, par Madame D . . . sont du nombre de ceux qui ont le plus réussi. On n'en peut douter, puis que le Public en a demandé une suite" (Juillet, 234-35).[21] Signing for Lhéritier, the *Mercure* alludes to the "réputation qu'elle s'est acquise" (Décembre, 33). "Mademoiselle Bernard" too, is publicly hailed when this widely-read journal declares that her poetry has won a prize from the Académie des Jeux Floraux (Septembre, 46). Publishing the two odes in question, the *Mercure* concluded its entry on Bernard with the typical eulogy of the woman writer: "Mademoiselle Bernard . . . se distingue tous les jours par divers Ouvrages en Vers & en Prose, où l'esprit brille par tout" (48). Such undisguised publicity should lead us to reconsider our assumptions involving the pseudonyms, ellipses, and anonymity that in part defined the female signature of the era. In women's fairy tales, elliptical signing and the deciphering efforts it incites often appear to challenge tradition more than accommodate it. Surely, the partial signature had little to do with secrecy. On the contrary, its effect was more akin to a seductive ploy, a device used to generate a very visible measure of fame.[22]

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[20] DeJean, "The (Literary) World at War, or What Can Happen When Women Go Public," *Going Public*, 121-22.

[21] Mary Storer's assertion that only Aulnoy's short novels received critical acclaim must be revised. See *La mode des contes de fées*, 39.

It is widely recognized that the seventeenth-century public demarcated fairy-tale writing as women's domain, inseparable from the feminocentric salons that nurtured it. Both modernist advocates of women's tales such as the *Mercure*, and detractors such as the clergyman Villiers, understood the fairy tale to be a female genre.[23] Since twentieth-century literary criticism has focused almost entirely on Perrault's narratives, it is easy to lose sight of the reality that Villiers' contemporaries concentrated their attention on women's tales. Villiers' 1699 manifesto attributed the invention of fairy tales to "ignorant" governesses and nursemaids, while further designating such narratives as women's work: "on a tellement regardé cela comme le partage des femmes que ce ne sont que des femmes qui ont composé ceux qui ont paru depuis quelque temps en si grand nombre."[24] Thought to have been transmitted by grandmothers and governesses, the fairy tale was an eminently female genre in the seventeenth-century consciousness. Yet, the era expanded its delineation of women's role to encompass the composing of tales in addition to their mere recitation.

The eulogistic *Mercure* celebrated the literary achievements of a group of female aristocrats and their associates, who frequented each other's social gatherings, were elected to the same honorary membership in literary societies, and were acclaimed by the era's academies. Aulnoy, Bernard, Lhéritier, and Murat, all were distinguished by their election to the Academy of the Ricovrati in Padua, Italy. Bernard and Lhéritier both received prizes for their poetry, the former from the Académie des Jeux Floraux, and the latter from the Lanternistes de Toulouse. Lhéritier was named an academician in the Lanternistes, and Bernard was honored by the French Academy.[25] Although the academy membership awarded women fairy-tale writers may have been purely honorific, their public recognition is proof that the notion of the woman author was taking hold in the contemporary consciousness.[26]

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[22] In *Cartesian Women*, Erica Harth argues that women who signed pseudonymously achieved writerly identity by "exchanging authentic authority for secrecy" (26). On the other hand, DeJean suggests that anonymous signing can be seen as a powerful bargaining position from which to negotiate the emerging literary field (*TG*, 96).

[23] On fairy-tale writing as a gendered phenomenon, see Seifert, "Tales of Difference: Infantilization and the Recuperation of Class and Gender in 17th-Century *Contes de fées*," 188-191.

[24] Villiers, *Entretiens sur les contes de fées*, 77.

[25] Mary Storer's already cited work provides the most extensive documentation on the prizes awarded the *conteuses*.

Whether denigrated by learned men such as Villiers or praised by the modernist *Mercure*, tale writing was considered a group phenomenon largely because the majority of narratives were published by salon women who displayed their authorial identity through interior signings and intratextual references to each other's work. At the end of the century when, as we have seen, French women were writing in heretofore unprecedented numbers, the *salonnières* Aulnoy, Bernard, Lhéritier, Murat, and their colleagues transformed what Erica Harth has described as the salon space of conversation into the space of writing.[27] Harth's delineation of the unquestionably relevant salon-academy dichotomy is carefully documented with regard to the contemporary testimony of Michel de Pure's *La Prétieuse* and Madeleine de Scudéry's moral essays, the *Conversations* (1680-92). Denied membership in the learned Parisian academies devoted to reading, study, and publishing, women established themselves in the salon, devoted to more "frivolous" pursuits and defined as a conversational space. According to Harth, the *ruelle* could be valorized only on the condition that its function was distinguished from the all-male academies where writing and publishing were the norms (27-38).

To be sure, this delineation of male and female space, which parallels the hierarchical conception of sexual difference as set forth in the tracts on the nature of women examined in the first chapter, continues a long-standing tradition. Yet, as Harth concedes, the *précieuses* of the 1650's did venture into the domain of writing. Antoine de Somaize's *Dictionnaire des prétieuses* (1661) indeed defined the latter as those women who, dissatisfied with their culturally designated role of arbiter of literary works written by men, "ont voulu mesler d'elles-mêmes d'escrire" (I, 9). Women's assertive interest in writing did not go unnoticed. Beginning from about 1660, the *précieuses*, those women thought to have encroached on what was at the time considered the male domain of erudition and composition, were censured by many of their learned contemporaries, including the writer and *salonnière* Scudéry herself.

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[26] See Timmermans, 223

[27] See Harth, *CW*, 15-33. As noted above, Timmermans illustrates the phenomenon of the emerging woman writer in the contemporary consciousness by alluding to women's fairy tales (217).

Nonetheless, although her later moral conversations are emphatic in their largely conservative delineation of the admissible parameters of women's expression, a close reading of Scudéry's earlier writings, including "Sapho à Erinne" in *Les Femmes illustres* (1641) and "Histoire de Sapho" in *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* (1653), calls into question the speech-writing dichotomy. It also links Scudéry to her friend and eulogizer Lhéritier, who, as we shall see, unabashedly encouraged her sister *salonnières* to take up the pen. While it cannot be denied that Scudéry's "Histoire de Sapho" refers to the perils of women's writing,[28] which was considered doubly transgressive from the standpoint of class (the aristocratic writer *in principle* risked derogation, or loss of noble status) and gender (women's acclaimed *pudeur* was antithetical to the act of publishing or making public), this tenth book of *Artamène* nonetheless artfully stages the heroine Sapho's writerly identity through a smoke screen of obsessively reassuring references to her modesty.[29]

Harth has argued that Damophile, the pedantic female character opposed to the "modest" Sapho, belongs to the academy, whereas the demure Sapho belongs to the salon (53-54). One could equally surmise that these two figures, one positive and the other negative, reflect the changing literary domain as described by Viala. At this time, the art of writing (Sapho) is increasingly distinguished from the art of erudition (Damophile). The emerging distinction between writing and erudition enables Scudéry to represent a woman writer without unduly disturbing her century's prejudices involving the delineation of separate male (*esprit*) and female (*corps*; *coeur*) spaces affiliated with the essays on the nature of women. When placed in the context of "Histoire de Sapho," Scudéry's earlier "Sapho à Erinne"[30] further underscores her ambivalent stance regarding the signature.[31] This first Sapho character invites her young disciple Erinne to join her in composing poetry on the heights of Permesse, a suggestive rescripting of Parnassus ("Parnasse" + "permettre") that, given the sexual content of the original Sappho's poetry, implies the fusion of passion and writing. Sapho cautions Erinne against false modesty and argues that she should immortalize herself by painting her own portrait and bequeathing other works to posterity: "Mais, si de votre propre main, vous laissez quelques marques de ce que vous êtes" (162). Lest the reader miss the point, a Postscript specifies that seventeenth-century women, "nos dames," should emulate Erinne by heeding Sapho's invitation to write.

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[28] Sapho thus laments the constrictions on literary expression: "dès qu'on se tire de la multitude, par les lumières de son esprit, & qu'on acquiert la réputation d'en avoir plus qu'un autre, & d'écrire assez bien en Vers, en Prose, pour pouvoir faire des Livres, on perd la moitié de sa Noblesse . . ." ("Histoire de Sapho," 366).

[29] I have analyzed this staging of Sapho's authorial identity in "Desire and Writing in Scudéry's 'Histoire de Sapho' " (*L'Esprit Créateur*, XXXV-2, 1995): 37-50.

[30] Critics such as DeJean and Beasley have stressed the importance of *Les Femmes illustres* in Scudéry's oeuvre. See DeJean, *Fictions of Sapho*, 102; Beasley, 55.

[31] Even though her authorial identity was known, Scudéry signed none of her works. Harth describes this unappropriated yet recognized signature as an "invisible" one, which is not absent, but "penned in invisible ink" (46). Thus Scudéry resolves what

Published before 1650, "Sapho à Erinne" can be included with the feminist literature of the first part of the century, when women's defenders were more interested in sexual equality than during the relatively more conservative post-Fronde era, which stressed sexual difference.[32] Indeed, Sapho enjoins Erinne to write poetry, whereas, in the 1695 "L'Adroite Princesse" (*Oeuvres meslées*), Scudéry's disciple Lhéritier, encourages her friend and colleague Murat to compose fairy tales:

> Mais ces Fables plairont jusqu'aux plus grands esprits, Si vous voulez, belle Comtesse, Par vos heureux talens orner de tels récits. L'Antique Gaule vous en presse, Daignez-donc mettre dans leurs jours Les Contes ingénus, quoique remplis d'adresse, Qu'ont inventés les Troubadours. (297-98)

By suggesting that Erinne try her hand at poetry, a consecrated genre according to classical poetics, Sapho makes no distinction between the authorial efforts of men and women. However, like her later incarnation, she does differentiate between male and female erudition, which she carefully separates from writing.[33] On the other hand, the modernist *salonnière* Lhéritier, whose *Apothéose de Mlle. de Scudéry* (1702) attests to the bond between these two advocates of female writing, specifies that Murat practice a genre which, like the novel, was identified with women.

Harth considers to be her paradoxical situation as *salonnière* and writer (44).

[32] Timmermans, 189; 319.

[33] "Mais pour donner quelque chose à l'usage et à la dépravation du siècle, laissez, Erinne, toutes ces sciences épineuses à ceux qui n'aiment à chercher la gloire que par des sentiers difficiles" ("Sapho à Erinne" in *Les Femmes illustres*, 160). Sapho pursues her argument by advising against arduous study, which is incompatible with society: "Je ne veux point que vous fuyiez la société ni la lumière, aux bords de Permesse."

Although most critics, referring to Boileau, Chapelain, Nicole, and Sorel among others,[34] have emphasized the lowly status accorded to what Georges May has called "ce genre qui n'en est pas un,"[35] DeJean suggests that literary history has relied too exclusively on Boileau to situate the novel in the seventeenth-century cultural landscape. In order to revise this myopic perspective, she proposes that scholars and literary historians examine the academician Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Traité de l'origine des romans* (1670), published four years prior to Boileau's *L'Art poétique*. Huet, whose account of the novel precedes a eulogy of Scudéry, traces the origin and development of the genre, whose civilizing influence is associated with the conversation of women.[36]

Lhéritier for one, whose fairy tale "Les Enchantements de l'éloquence" includes an apology of the novel, surely subscribed to Huet's literary theories. Moreover, a modernist theoretician like her uncle Perrault, Lhéritier can perhaps be considered a representative for *mondain* culture. Adhering to Huet's theories, both court and salon valorized women's "natural". expression, which contemporaries associated with the aristocratic aesthetic of negligence. Near mid-century, Claude Favre de Vaugelas asserted in *Remarques sur la langue française* (1647) that women, by virtue of their ignorance of Latin and Greek, were the most competent judges in linguistic matters. Around the end of the century, La Bruyère's *Les Caractères* (1694) praised women's "natural" gift for epistolary exchange (no. 37).

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[34] According to Boileau, "Dans un roman frivole aisément tout s'excuse. / C'est assez qu'en courant la fiction amuse. / Trop de rigueur alors serait hors de saison" (*L'Art poétique*, Chant III, v 119-121 (171). In *Dialogue des héros de roman*, Boileau criticizes the novel's conversations, portraits, and interminable discussions on love. The *Dialogue* also serves as a base from which to launch an attack against the writings of Madeleine de Scudéry.

According to Sorel, those who prize novels include "les femmes et les filles, et les hommes de la cour et du monde . . .". Novels, written for the amusement of women and girls, are described as "le triomphe de leur sexe" (*De la connaissance des bons livres*, 1671, cited by Maurice Lever, *Le Roman français au XVIIe siècle*, 14-15). As for Chapelain, his "Lettre à M. de Scudéry du 8 nov., 1660," asserts that "Les lecteurs de romans ne sont ni philosophes ni gens d'Etat, mais sont gens de coeur ou femmes délicates" (Quoted by Lever, 15). In his *De l'éducation des filles*, Fénelon seeks to divert young girls' attention from "frivolous" novels and to interest them instead in more useful works.

[35] May, *Le Dilemme du roman au XVIIIe siècle*, 17.

[36] DeJean, *TG*, 169-77.

Since the Fronde, whose aftermath coincides with what DeJean designates as the first generation of seventeenth-century women authors, women's writing is defined as different from men's through its lack of pedantry and professionalism.[37] Timmermans has argued that contemporaries' recognition of female authorial status in the second half of the century was perhaps enabled by the prevailing notion of the specificity of women's writing. Women thus capitalized on their culturally assigned genre, be it novel or fairy tale, to enter the literary field.[38] Tirelessly reiterating their espousal of amateur status as implied in the aesthetics of negligence, the *conteuses* promote an identity as authors who write "naturally," unlike learned men. The vociferous opposition to women writers from the likes of Boileau, Molière, and Balzac, the latter of whom described them as persons who "se travestissent par l'esprit,"[39] merely affirms women's entry into a domain that tradition had delimited as a male enclave.

If one were to determine those forces that sanctioned the notion of women's authorial persona in the contemporary consciousness of the second half of the seventeenth century, two networks of influences appear prominent. First, the enhancement of the author's status was accomplished through the separation of writing and erudition into two distinct spheres. As a result of this crucial differentiation, the traditional prejudices involving nobility, erudition, and publishing were confronted with the growing prestige of the professional writer. Moreover, this very distinction between learning and the art of composing facilitated women's access to the literary domain by making it appear that they were not encroaching on the intellectual realm which the era insistently reserved for men.[40] Second, the modernist approbation of women as arbiters of taste, although based on gender polarities and closely linked to the essentializing of female nature preeminent in the writings on women, nevertheless enabled the late century's acknowledgment of the female writer.

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[37] DeJean, *TG*, 73-77.

[38] Timmermans, 232; 236. In her study of Sévigné, Michèle Farrell states that the writer "cultivated the notion of a culture and language specific to women, thus subscribing to a program of domestication through assignment of distinct spheres and competences for women. She thus both represented and reinforced conservative traditions while breaking into the scene of writing" (*Performing Motherhood*, 19).

[39] Guez de Balzac, *Lettres* (1636), 237. Quoted by Harth, *Cartesian Women*, 29.

[40] The much-despised figure of the *femme savante* was particularly prevalent after the Fronde, when in an attempt to reinstate order, the boundaries separating the sexes were reinforced. See Timmermans, 236 and ch. III of this study.

Clearly inhabited by contradiction, the figure of the woman writer who attained prominence through a certain ignorance or lack of education was perhaps destined from the outset for a provisional existence and a paradoxical victory. Yet, the *salonnières* seem to have profited from these converging influences, which encouraged them to cultivate their identity as women writers. In spite of the restrictions implicit in the era's notion of the female writer, all the evidence points to the fact that the parameters of "literature" were indeed extended to include women. As we shall see in the following examination of fairy-tale poetics, women at once embrace and manipulate modernist *mondain* ideology. Ostentatiously adopting the consecrated aristocratic aesthetic of negligence, the *conteuses* cultivate a positive class and gender identity in order equally to write beyond it. Claims of frivolity, amusement, amateurism, all found in women's metacommentaries on their chosen genre,[41] at once denote their own ambivalence in crossing over into the "masculine" territory of writing and publishing, and ensconce them safely in an ideological social frame which their fictional narratives will at times challenge.

If the notion of the female author came of age during the last years of the century, it is perhaps because the salon appears to have conflated the notions of conversation and composition.[42] Both DeJean and Timmermans agree that, from around 1690, the notion of the professional female author became a possibility.[43] Delineating three generations of women writers, DeJean traces the evolution from a collective writerly identity designated as "salon writing," to the modern conception of the individual author. According to DeJean, the first generation, which included the ex-Frondeuses, engaged in writing as a group activity, described in Caumont de La Force's *Les Jeux d'esprit, ou la promenade de la princesse de Conty à Eu* (1701). "Salon writing" is a collaborative effort involving circulation of manuscripts for corrections, suggestions, and perhaps additions (22; 73-77). The second generation (1660-70) goes beyond collective writing and seeks a degree of recognition for the individual author. Women fairy-tale writers belong to what DeJean sees as the third generation (1690-1715), engaged primarily in publishing historical novels while largely claiming authorship of their works (128). With this schema in mind, the group phenomenon would hypothetically situate Aulnoy, Bernard, Lhéritier, Murat, and their associates at the intersection of two traditions of seventeenth-century women's writing, one collective, the other individual. Nevertheless, upon careful examination of tale narratives together with the theoretical or quasi-theoretical statements associated with them, one discerns instead acts of textual solidarity that confirm the sense of a female literary tradition, which is not necessarily synonymous with a collaborative effort.[44]

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[41] "Sans doute le dilenttantisme affiché par les femmes rendit-il possible l'évolution des moeurs tout en préservant les apparences de l'immobilité sociale." Timmermans, 232.

[42] There are very few documents on the salon at the end of the century. Although fiction cannot be considered to reflect social conditions in a realistic manner, women's fairy tales are nonetheless valuable documents on this as-yet-unwritten history.

[43] See DeJean, *TG* and Timmermans, 216.

Analysis discloses that the *conteuses* worked together to establish a collective identity which, significantly, did not preclude the stirrings of a desire to claim individual authorship. And while group dynamics undoubtedly played an inspirational role in the composing of women's narratives, this aspect is perhaps over-emphasized in recent critical studies. To illustrate the point, Harth has argued that collaborative writing, not unknown in male academic circles, was not exclusive to the salon.[45] One might also add that the fraternity of male theoreticians in the prestigious French Academy, a kind of classical family with Aristotle as their titular head, was most surely involved in a collective enterprise. As regards the *conteuses*, group solidarity seems paradoxically to have enhanced the formation of separate authorial identities. These latter are reinforced by interior signatures along with the self-conscious display and stylistic continuities that betray the hand of the independent artist who seeks recognition for her work. Women writers of the fairy tale advertise themselves as a group to further their quest for what is perhaps of necessity a separate authorial identity, however ambivalently assumed.

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[44] Timmermans agrees that the thesis which argues for the collaborative efforts of the *conteuses* is based on mere conjecture. In her view, fairy-tale writing is a prolongation of *préciosité*, understood to encompass the notion of the professional writer, 220.

[45] Harth, "The Salon Woman Goes Public . . . or Does She," in *Going Public*, 185-86. Harth gives ample evidence that collective writing should not be exclusively associated with women. As a case in point, she cites the *Guirlande de Julie*, authored by men. Harth concludes that the evidence for collective "salon writing" is slim.

FAIRY-TALE POETICS

Emulating Aristotle, the architects of classical poetics conceived of poetry as superior to truth, since, like philosophy, poetry strives to attain the universal, which alone can instruct humanity in virtue. However, seventeenth-century poetology, influenced by the *Poétique* of Castelvetro (1570), enunciates a rhetorical poetics that instructs the poet to accommodate his work to the morals and customs of his audience. Thanks to this rhetorical component, a moralizing dimension is integrated into the theories of literary creation. The opposed concepts of the *vrai* (that which is) and the *vraisemblable* (that which ought to be) are respectively related to the distinct realms of history and poetry. According to the tenets of verisimilitude, the artist was invited to correct historical truth in order to render it more palatable to contemporary mores. In the classical age, the term *vraisemblable* assumed meanings that are moral (art represents virtue as rewarded and vice as punished), social (art represents what the public considers possible), and ontological (art enlarges truth to render it more perfect), but the moral and social senses predominated. Originally intended as a mere guide for the poet, the notion of *vraisemblance* served increasingly restrictive and censuring purposes as the century progressed.[46] In the words of the theoretician Rapin, "Le vraisemblable est tout ce qui est conforme à l'opinion du public."[47]

Given the eminently social preoccupations that informed theories of literary creation in seventeenth-century France, it is hardly surprising that classical poetics at times intersects with the treatises on the nature of women examined at the beginning of this study. Perhaps one of the most revealing links between poetology and the delineation of gender identities involves La Mesnardière's *La Poétique* (1640), a treatise intended for those practicing the major genres of epic, tragedy, and comedy. Subscribing to the notion of social verisimilitude, La Mesnardière reassembles certain prevailing stereotypes of his era and incorporates them in his instructions to the writer regarding the proper morals for characters according to sex, age, and condition. In the following passage, the theoretician lists the qualities upon which the poet may draw in order to depict men as opposed to women:

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[46] See Aron Kibedi-Varga, *Les Poétiques du classicisme*, 14-17; 41-42.

[47] Rapin, *Réflexions* (1675), quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 196.

> *Les hommes* seront solides, rudes, hardis, généreux, chagrins, résolus, avares, prudents, ambitieux, tranquilles, fidèles et laborieux. *Les Femmes* seront dissimulées, douces, faibles, délicates, modestes, pudiques, courtoises, sublimes en leurs pensées, soudaines en leurs désirs, violentes dans leurs passions, soupçonneuses dans leurs joies, jalouses jusqu'à la fureur, passionnées pour leur beauté, amoureuses de leurs visions, de louanges, et de la gloire, orgueilleuses dans leur empire, susceptibles d'impressions, désireuses de nouveautés, impatientes et volages.[48] (emphasis added)

Clearly, the century's passion for defining women was not restricted to its version of the *Querelle des femmes*. Indeed, the verbal prolixity which Fénelon attributed to women[49] is here transformed into the defining attribute of the theoretician. La Mesnardière's list of female traits is most effusive in underscoring women's link with the passions. Associating women with the emotive is surely a corollary of their identification with the body as expressed in the tracts on female nature. Himself an appreciative reader of these writings, La Mesnardière alludes to them in order to validate the accuracy of his list: "étant vrai que les Philosophes en voyent clairement les causes dans les divers tempéraments qui distinguent ces deux sexes, et que la plupart des hommes en ressentent les effects."[50] Little wonder then, that when confronted with the vast body of writings defining them, women respond by creating "excessively" long fairy tales. Closed off from the erudition that fortified the prejudicial portraits drawn up by men, women writers extend textual space as if it were a forum for long-denied self-assertion.

If, in concordance with the theories of Le Bossu, classical poetics inscribes the moral in the form,[51] La Mesnardière's example teaches us that the era's prescribed formal representation most certainly intersects with gender prejudices, which are reinforced as they are reiterated in the guise of fiction. Perhaps with the express intention of circumventing these ideologically-charged forms, the *conteuses* "naturally" disrupt classical poetics by adopting the consecrated aesthetics of negligence. Clearly, theirs is an innovation born of a conformist maneuver. Just as women's writing was envisioned as necessarily different from men's, so too was their poetics, enabled by the modernist promotion of women in *mondain* culture, distinct from the theories of classicism.

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[48] Quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 174.

[49] *De l'éducation des filles*, 146. See also ch. IV.

[50] Quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 174.

[51] See the discussion of the "moral of the form" in ch. IV.

With the notable exception of Lhéritier, whose erudite background and friendship with the modernist academician Perrault placed her at the center of theoretical debate, the *conteuses* rarely elaborate on the equivocal or absent morals that define their narratives.[52] Women's inattention to what classical poetics emphasized as the moral center of all art was indeed criticized by Villiers, who deplored the lack of moral instruction in women's narratives. If one understood that tales "n'ont été inventés que pour développer et rendre sensible quelque moralité importante," protests Villiers, "on ne les auroit point regardez comme le partage des ignorants et des femmes."[53] Perrault, for one, was careful to preface his verse and prose tales with statements of moral intent meant to valorize the "bagatelles" composed for the reader's pleasure and instruction.[54] Conforming in spirit to the precepts of classical theory, the academician renders the (moral and social) truth more attractive to his public through the disguises of his art.[55] Opposed to Perrault's seamless narratives that wed moral to form, women's self-reflexive tales expose the writer's ploys while undermining the fictional illusion. In consequence, the reader is distracted from the moral message and invited instead to reflect on the very process that fuses moral and form in the classically conceived text.

Although Aulnoy is credited with publishing the first fairy tale,[56] Storer designates Lhéritier as the theoretician and initiator of this female genre.

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[52] In opposition to her colleagues, Lhéritier's *L'Erudition enjouée* asserts that literature should offer youth "des tableaux qui puissent les instruire en les divertissant" (Vol. III, 29-59), quoted by Storer, 54.

[53] Villiers, 77.

[54] In his 1695 Preface to the verse tales, Perrault specified that "ces bagatelles n'étaient de pures bagatelles, qu'elles renfermaient une morale utile, et que le récit enjoué dont elles étaient enveloppées n'avait été choisi que pour les faire entrer plus agréablement dans l'esprit" (Collinet, 50). The Preface to the 1697 prose tales reiterates these intentions; these latter narratives "renferment tous une Morale très sensée" (126).

[55] According to Le Bossu's *Traité du poème épique*, truth, meaning the moral the author wishes to convey, is necessarily hidden. The purpose of fiction involves disguising this truth in an agreeable manner in order to render it more palatable to the public (quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 139). In his *Réflexions*, Rapin asserted that humanity is more receptive to pleasure than to reason. Therefore, the poet's goal is to render the moral acceptable through fiction (quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 156-58).

[56] "L'Ile de la Félicité," is found in Aulnoy's 1690 novel *Histoire d'Hypolite, comte de Duglas*. See Preface.

Perhaps more than any other *conteuse* with the possible exception of Henriette de Murat, Perrault's niece was pivotal in publicizing women's endeavors and in fostering contemporaries' perception of fairy-tale writing as a female genre. Appropriately designated "Scudéry's heir,"[57] Lhéritier too encouraged women to write while celebrating their successes in the above-mentioned eulogy of Scudéry and in her earlier *Triomphe de Madame Deshoulières, Reçue dixième Muse au Parnasse* (1694). Clearly, this intimate of Perrault was conscious of promoting and defending what she considered to be a female literary tradition. Prior to composing the *Apothéose* that imagined Scudéry as a Parnassian deity, Lhéritier both eulogized Deshoulière's officially acclaimed poetry and expressed an energetic opposition to Boileau, who would later harshly criticize Scudéry's novels in the *Dialogue des héros de roman* (1713). Entreating women to enlighten themselves and perfect their reason, Lhéritier's *L'Erudition enjouée* (1703), reflects the *mondain* orientation of her theories, while at the same time recalling a similarly titled fairy tale, "Les Enchantements de l'éloquence."

To be sure, this *salonnière*'s appeal to women's authorial talents is intertwined with a decidedly modernist poetics wedded to the aristocratic aesthetics of negligence.[58] At the conclusion of her "L'Adroite Princesse" dedicated to Murat, Lhéritier thus describes the techniques of her art:

> je vous l'ay contée un peu long: mais quand on dit des Contes, c'est une marque que l'on n'a pas beaucoup d'affaires: on cherche à s'amuser & il me paraît qu'il ne coûte pas plus de les allonger pour faire durer davantage la conversation . . . .[59]

Resolutely laying claim to the modernist *mondain* aesthetics of negligence, this women's advocate fuses the previously separate realms of conversation and composition, all the while artfully defending herself and her colleagues against what Villiers will denounce as the inappropriate length of their narratives. Understandably, declarations such as this one have been adduced to bolster critical arguments that interpret tale production as a fantasy-embellished reproduction of salon conversation. Yet, as I will continue to propose, the "conversation" which Lhéritier and her colleagues sought to prolong through writing often expanded salon boundaries and even ventured at times onto Scudéry's *Mer dangereuse* of unchecked desire. Clearly, Lhéritier's melding of modernism and feminism differs considerably from her uncle's *Apologie des femmes*, which like Fénelon's own *De l'éducation des filles*, confined women to domestic roles. In opposition to Perrault's, this *conteuse*'s theoretical enterprise is undertaken to empower women's writing, confronted as it was with the long-standing *mondain* distrust of publishing. In the collection that includes two of her three tale narratives, *Oeuvres meslées*, Lhéritier's "Lettre à Mme. D. G . . . " advises the latter not to judge the entire genre solely on Lhéritier's contribution:

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[57] See DeJean, *FS*, 114.

[58] The *Mercure galant* quotes at length Lhéritier's defense of the moderns.

[59] *Oeuvres meslées*, 294-95.

> Mais avertissez vos amis qu'ils n'aillent pas juger de cette mode par les seuls ouvrages qu'elle m'a fait produire: ils luy feroient tort: ils en verront bien d'une autre délicatesse. Je ne sais que mettre les autres en train: N'est-ce pas beaucoup faire, que de marcher des premiers dans des *routes nouvelles*? (318, emphasis added)

Assuming her authority as pioneer in this genre predominated by several women, Lhéritier takes pains to signal the heterogeneity of the group's literary production. In all evidence, Lhéritier's plotting out of "new routes" is not meant to imply that they inevitably lead in the same direction. Writing in a foreword to her own collection of four tales, *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* (1699), the *conteuse* Murat reiterates this notion of group diversity. From the perspective of the Countess de Murat, group solidarity in no way precludes the desire to claim individual distinction. Acknowledging a common source for her fairy tale "Le Sauvage" and certain tales by other *salonnières*, Murat nonetheless underscores the unique qualities that define her own narrative:

> mes Contes sont composez dès le mois d'Avril dernier, & que si je me suis rencontrée avec une de ces Dames en traitant quelques-uns des mêmes sujets, je n'ay point pris d'autre modèle que l'original, ce qui seroit aisé à justifier par les *routes différentes* que nous avons prises. (n. pag., emphasis added)

Having asserted her artistic independence, Murat evokes the writer's intimate rapport with her creation:

> Quelques mediocres que soient les Ouvrages que l'on donne au public, l'on sent toûjours pour eux *un amour de pere* qui oblige d'en justifier la naissance, & l'on seroit tres fâché de les voir paroître avec quelque deffaut. (n. pag., emphasis added)

Murat's "masculine" desire to compose for the public leads her to voluntarily assume a fatherly affection for her invention; she engages in a kind of literary cross-dressing to effect a subtle incursion into a reputedly male domain. I have quoted these passages at length to emphasize that, regardless of women's ostentatious espousal of the aesthetic of negligence and in spite of their reiterated claims as to the frivolity of their enterprise, one discovers an equally significant number of statements which affirm their distinct sense of pride in individual authorship. Read alongside the interiorly-signed tales themselves, Lhériter's "new routes," intersecting with Murat's "different routes," strongly suggest that the *conteuses* claim authorial responsibility for their works while inventing writerly personas that at times question the very socially approved class aesthetic they publicly embrace.[60]

In her unpublished journal written at Loches where she had been exiled for her role in composing a pamphlet critical of Mme. de Maintenon, Murat describes her writing as governed by neither rules nor measure, but rather inspired solely by whim.[61] In the same manuscript, she describes Aulnoy's manner of composing as parallel to her own: "elle écrivoit comme je fais par fantaisie, au milieu et au bruit de mille gens qui venoient chez elle, et elle ne donnoit d'application à ses ouvrages qu'autant que cela la divertissoit" (173-74). Although this description has been associated with salon writing, there is no mention of collaboration here nor in the metatextual comments that abound in the short novels that frame many of Aulnoy's fairy tales. Instead, Murat predictably focuses on the untutored "natural" aristocratic ideal of composition, a leitmotif of fairy-tale poetics.

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[60] In her unpublished manuscript, Murat offers a contradictory assessment of her relationship to writing. Purportedly responding to a request that she allow her works to be published, Murat demurs: "Souvent l'impression déshonore un auteur / Lisez mes manuscrits, trop injuste Silvie / Contentez-vous d'imprimer dans le coeur / Tout ce qui fait les biens et les maux de la vie" (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 3471, 337-38). Quoted by Storer, 146. Although Storer cites this quote to prove that Murat had a certain disregard for her writings, one should remember that this journal was composed by a newly-circumspect, because exiled, countess.

[61] "Journal," 191. Quoted by Storer, 145.

While the notion of collective writing cannot be substantiated, there is abundant evidence that the *salonnières* cultivated a strong sense of group solidarity. Primary among those texts that state the case for women's supportive interaction is Murat's dedication of her *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* to "modern fairies," "Aux Fées modernes." A close reading of this manifesto of fairy-tale writing discloses that the *conteuses* too operated within a field of conflicting alliances as described by Viala. In addition to the obligatory bow to the monarchy through dedications to female royalty, women tale writers sought to demonstrate their allegiance to the *mondain* milieu and especially to their female colleagues. The latter two alliances did coincide for the most part; modernist theory, as we have seen, was eminently compatible with a restricted view of women's authorial talents. Yet, analysis of Murat's dedication shows that this was at times a less than perfect fit.

Informed by a dichotomy opposing ancient to modern fairies, this manifesto implicitly links the modernist Perrault's tales to the ancient fairies, who are preoccupied with lowly domestic tasks of the kind advocated for the homebound women of Perrault's *Apologie*. The irreverant Murat expressly disdains Perrault's frequently misogynist tales by ridiculing the outmoded "art" of these ancient fairies together with their "Contes de ma Mère l'Oye," the very inscription found on the frontispiece of Perrault's *Contes du temps passé*. When one considers the close ties between Murat and Lhéritier along with the latter's approbation of her colleague's work, one is led to conclude that Perrault's reputed influence on his niece was perhaps less absolute than has been assumed. Certainly, the contradictions inherent to modernist "feminism" did not go unnoticed by those women who stood to benefit the most from it.

Addressing "Mesdames," the modern fairies or *salonnières*, Murat proceeds to define their art by evoking the very unsettling of hierarchies that characterized the "petite république" of Aulnoy's "Serpentin Vert," "où rien n'étoit assorti selon son espèce":

> Mais pour vous MESDAMES, vous avez pris bien *une autre route*: Vous ne vous occupez que de grandes choses, dont les moindres sont de donner l'esprit à ceux & à celles qui n'en ont point, de la beauté aux laides, de l'éloquence aux ignorans, des richesses aux pauvres, & de l'éclat aux choses les plus obscures. (à iij-à iiij, emphasis added)

The analogy between Murat's conception of the art of fairy-tale writing and Carolyn Lougee's analysis of the functions of the seventeenth-century salon is quite striking.[62] A crossroads of social mobility where wit, beauty, and eloquence were meted out to those desirous of acquiring an aura of nobility, the salon, like the writing that emanates from its center, is involved in the disordering process of transformation. One discerns a topography of fairy-tale writing in which Murat's "other route," her "different routes," and Lhéritier's own "new routes" delineate a symbolic territory far from the confines of the family hearth so ubiquitous in the texts on women's nature. Bypassing the rules of classicism that issued from the Academy, the itinerary of fairy-tale writing leads the reader to Murat's "Empire de Férie," inhabited equally by dispossessed royalty and metamorphosed adventuresses. The eminent theorist Rapin would surely have disapproved of this fictional empire's disregard for the prerogatives of order and rank:

> On ne peut plaire sûrement que par les règles: il faut donc en établir et ne pas s'exposer à confondre les choses en imitant ces extravagances qu'Horace blâme si fort. C'est-à-dire de joindre les choses naturellement incompatibles, *de mêler les tigres avec des agneaux*, des oiseaux avec des serpents, *de composer un même corps d'espèces différentes* et d'autoriser par là des rêveries moins digérées, que les songes d'un malade.[63] (emphasis added)

Rapin's depiction of the joining of "naturally incompatible things" bears an uncanny resemblance to the "small republic" of Aulnoy's already examined "Serpentin Vert," where lions do in fact dance with lambs. If, as Rapin believes, pleasing by the rules is motivated by an exclusionary aesthetics, *mesdames les fées* will imagine their own inclusive poetics that gives free reign to unorthodox identities unfettered by the strictures of reason. Deliberately electing the "frivolous" fairy-tale genre, itself excluded from the officially sanctioned literature of the era,[64] women writers circumvent the burdens of a literary tradition in which their participation was restricted through lack of educational opportunity.

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[62] See Lougee, *Le Paradis des femmes*, and ch. II.

[63] *Réflexions*, chs. VII-XI, quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 158.

[64] In his *Satire XII*, "Sur l'équivoque," Boileau's scorn for fairy tales is evident: "Ou qu'en toutes saisons sur les murs de Paris, / On ne voit affichez de recueils d'amourettes, / De vers, de contes bleus, de frivoles sornettes, / Souvent peu recherchez du public nonchalant, / Mais vantez à coup sûr du Mercure galant" (*Oeuvres complètes*, 96).

Like her colleague Murat, Aulnoy sought to please by her own rules, and wrote at least part of her vast oeuvre while secluded from polite Parisian society. Whether seeking to "pleasantly amuse" Madame or "divert" the Princesse de Conti, Aulnoy too espouses the obligatory aesthetics of negligence while ingratiating herself with her royal dedicatees.[65] Yet, perhaps more than any of her colleagues, Aulnoy's espousal of *mondain* aesthetics is overshadowed by her deliberate showcasing of the easily discernible interior signature. Aulnoy, the consummate artist of *mesdames les fées,* offered her own pictorial version of Murat's proselytizing "Aux Fées modernes." Gabrielle Verdier has shown how the frontispiece of Aulnoy's third volume of *Les Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode* modifies that of Perrault's *Contes du temps passé* by substituting a learned sibyl-like figure dismissive of domesticity for Perrault's hearth-loving peasant woman.[66] Situated at the threshold of the text, this sybilline double for the writer invites the reader to enter a fictive realm in which Murat's "ancient fairies" of folklore have all but vanished.

Indeed, this most exhibitionist of tale writers appears as herself, "Madame D.," in the introduction to the third volume of her *Contes de fées*.[67] In the course of an excursion to St. Cloud, Aulnoy's namesake Madame D., who politely declines a promenade in the company of her friends, thus responds to their suggestion that she amuse herself instead with *Les Contes de fées*: "Il faudroit que je ne les eusse pas écrits, répliqua Madame D. . . . pour me laisser au moins prévenir par les grâces de la nouveauté" (376-77). Yet, when upon the company's return they proceed to recount their adventures, Madame D., an author who will not be upstaged, interrupts them in order to recite her own story first. Preoccupied with the demands of her authorial persona, Aulnoy's theoretical musings tend to be interlaced with tale narrative and thus appear less evident than those of Lhéritier and Murat. Nonetheless, this *conteuse*'s reflection on the art of composing tales can be inferred from the frame stories or *nouvelles espagnoles* in which the greater number of her tales are embedded.

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[65] Aulnoy dedicates the first volume of *Les Contes de fées* to Madame, and the second volume of the *Contes nouveaux* to the Princesse de Conti. See Storer, 36-37.

[66] Verdier, "Figures de la conteuse dans les contes de fées féminins," 484-489. Verdier's analysis deciphers at length Aulnoy's mise en scène as the writer "Madame D." (489-93).

[67] The Slatkine edition of the *Nouveau Cabinet des fées* includes this introduction in Vol. III, 376-380.

Virtually without exception, the fairy tales embedded in Aulnoy's short novels *Ponce de Leon, Don Fernand de Tolede*, and *Le Nouveau Gentilhomme bourgeois*, elicit praise from the frame-story characters who at once recite them and serve as their critics. Emulating the laudatory *Mercure*, well-disposed characters offer their positive critiques; "beautiful romances" ("Le Mouton"), "gallant" ("Finette-Cendron," "Le Dauphin"), and "perfect" ("Le Pigeon et la Colombe") are the terms of consensus for tale narratives. The predominately female narrators are commended for embellishing the ordinary ("Fortunée"), for displaying their fine wit and delicate style ("Babiole"), and for exercising their sublime intelligence ("La Chatte Blanche"). The most literary of all the *conteuses* took obvious care to provide her works with a favorable critical reception.

In regard to the prevailing ideal of negligence, it is at once embraced and underplayed. On the one hand, a female character in *Ponce de Leon* proposes that these "bagatelles" be more playful than serious and that they offer "un peu de morale" (III, 471), while another in *Don Fernand de Tolede*, the narrator of "Babiole," asserts that such simple tales do not require great genius (IV, 143). On the other hand, this predictably nonchalant aesthetic is contradicted by other characters' assertion that simplicity is the hard-earned effect of art. Both proponents of premeditated art, a female character of *Ponce de Leon* claims "Je ne laisse pas d'être persuadée qu'il y a de l'art dans cette sorte de simplicité," while a male character in *Le Gentilhomme bourgeois* declares that "il y entre plus d'art que vous ne pensez" (V, 290). Pursuing the same line of reasoning, one female character in *Ponce de Leon*, the narrator of "Finette Cendron," affirms that tale authors are capable of more important works, "quand ils veulent s'en donner la peine" (III, 471).

However, these favorable commentaries, seeming to fashion a receptive space around the tales, are at times undercut by the negative qualities of the frame story characters who enunciate them. A case in point involves the *Gentilhomme bourgeois*, whose nouveau riche hero Dandinardière and his companions, the *précieuses* Virginie and Marthnide, live in a world of fairy-tale illusion derisively mocked by the narrator. Daughters of a provincial nobleman, the tale-writing heroines, who exchange their birth names for invented ones and mistake fiction for reality, closely resemble Molière's provincial *Précieuses ridicules*. Aulnoy, whose own self-conscious fairy-tale narratives are remarkable for their demystifying of the fictional illusion,[68] takes care to distinguish her own authorial persona from those of the romantically naive Virginie and Marthnide. Yet, paradoxically, these two provincial *précieuses* are said to have authored the six fairy tales embedded in the *Gentilhomme bourgeois*. To be sure, the lowly provincial who unsuccessfully imitated Parisian high society was a commonly derided figure whose maladroitness excluded her from the very company she worshipped.

On one level, Aulnoy is merely availing herself of the prerogatives of social verisimilitude, which sanction the incorporation of social prejudices. Nonetheless, through the mask of irony and its capacity to enunciate simultaneously two contradictory realities, in this instance designating both the ridiculed provincials Virginie and Marthnide and the elitist Parisian Aulnoy as authors of the embedded tales, our *conteuse* risks colliding with the imperatives of *mondain* culture. Although safely distanced from her Parisian milieu, Aulnoy's mockery of the provincial *salonnières* is ironically deflected back onto her own authorial persona and by extension all female writers of elite salon society. In light of this ironic doubling, one should perhaps revise the prevailing critical judgment that interprets frame narratives and their embedded tales as a "mirror" of the contemporary salon's own situation of enunciation.[69] For, although aristocratic frame-story characters do appear to emulate their producers' own salon recitations, the self-referential narratives of Aulnoy, Bernard, Lhéritier, and Murat embody a critical distance that can distort this "mirror"'s reflection.

Like Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard embedded her two fairy tales in a short novel, *Inès de Cordue, nouvelle espagnole* (1696). As if reticent to venture boldly into the domain of theory, both writers enunciate their theoretical reflections through the intermediary of frame-story heroines, who compose their own rules for the tales with which they ostensibly seek to amuse one another. Yet, Bernard's foray into fairy-tale poetics is of a more serious strain than Aulnoy's intermittent metatextual comments. Folded into the story like the interiority it seeks to convey, Bernard's theory of representation includes a definite affective thrust:

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[68] Marcelle Maistre Welch is among those critics who have underscored Aulnoy's aversion for romanticizing of any sort. See "Les Jeux de l'écriture dans les contes de fées de Madame d'Aulnoy," especially 78-80.

[69] See Robert, *Le Conte de fées littéraire en France*, 329; Timmermans, 221. Discussing the *conteuses'* preference for frame narratives and embedded tales, Timmermans writes: "Il s'agit là d'un reflet embelli de la narration orale des contes dans les salons."

> Que les avantures fussent toujours contre la vray-semblance, & les sentimens toujours naturels; on jugea que l'agrément de ces contes ne consistoit qu'à faire voir ce qui se passe dans le coeur, & que du reste il y avoit une sorte de merite dans le merveilleux des imaginations qui n'estoient point retenuës par les apparences de la vérité. (7-8)

Storer asserts that these "rules" were discussed in the salons and cited in the novel *L'Histoire de la Marquise, Marquis de Banneville*.[70] It would surely come as no surprise that the salon, birthplace of Scudéry's *amour tendre*, eventually embraced a non-rationalist epistemology such as this one.

From the heart of their own Academy, women such as Bernard speak out against what Kibedi-Varga has described as the increasingly oppressive uses of verisimilitude. Opposing imagination and the marvelous to the conformist ideologies of social and moral "vray-semblance," Bernard begs to differ with the classical theorist Rapin, who asserted that "Le merveilleux est tout ce qui est contre le cours ordinaire de la nature."[71] Diametrically opposed to the academician's rationalist perspective, the *conteuse*'s conception of *le merveilleux* is infused with a naturalism at odds with the constraints of social propriety. Bernard implicitly associates fairy tales, which she refers to as "ces sortes d'Histoires" to an alternative form of verisimilitude found in women's *nouvelles historiques* of the period, including her own *Malheurs de l'amour*. Both short novels and fairy tales were imbued with a certain realism, whether it be the depiction of sentiment or the inclusion of barely veiled allusions to contemporary society. Indeed, the fairy tale's chronologically disruptive contemporaneous allusions, contributing as they do to tale reflexivity, can unsettle the fictional illusion in such a way that event is subordinated to a tentative exploration of affectivity.

Like Aulnoy's, Bernard's frame story is a vehicle for incorporating laudatory commentaries on the recited tales. Yet unlike Aulnoy's *Le Nouveau Gentilhomme bourgeois*, *Inès de Cordue* does not significantly undercut such praise through the foibles of its narrators. After the recitation of "Le Prince Rosier," a queen applauds, a male character utters

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[70] Storer, 70. This anonymous work appeared in the *Mercure galant*, February and December, 1695. Subsequently, it was published in *Moetjens*, Vol. III, Part IV.

[71] Rapin, *Réflexions*, quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 196.

"excessive" eulogies, while a marquis becomes passionately enamored of the female narrator. When the subsequently recited "Riquet à la houppe" fails to elicit the same marquis' commendation, another female narrator is described as "rightfully" outraged. Emulating the other *conteuses*, Bernard secures her authorial foothold through a system of alliances that include the requisite dedication to royalty, here the Prince of Dombes, and the professed allegiance to the ideal of negligence: "ce sera beaucoup pour moy s'il [the tale] vous amuse pendant votre enfance" (no p.). Nonetheless, this obligatory self-effacing gesture is belied not merely by the artistry of Bernard's carefully wrought narratives but also by Fontenelle, to whom Bernard was probably related. Writing in the popular *Mercure* (Août, 1687, 286-92), Fénelon asserted that Bernard labored assiduously at her craft while taking great pains to polish her style. Indeed, as Storer has pointed out, the impecunious but talented Bernard may be considered a professional writer.[72]

CONVERSATIONAL POETICS

Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon published her thirty-two page version of tale type 480, "Les Enchantements de l'éloquence," in 1695, two years prior to Perrault's considerably shorter "Les Fées."[73] Directly opposed to

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[72] Storer, 71. Lewis Seifert designates Aulnoy, Lhériter, and Durand as professional authors, whereas Auneuil, Bernard, La Force, and Murat occupy an "intermediary position" between professionalism and the notion of writing as a "noble pastime." "*Les Fées modernes*," 141.

[73] Perhaps because of the *conteuses*' elliptical signatures, which were no longer transparent for eighteenth-century publishers, "Les Enchantements" and "L'Adroite Princesse," were long attributed to Perrault. Lhéritier's "Enchantements," published together with her "Adroite Princesse" (*Oeuvres meslées*) can be found in Gilbert Rouger's edition of the *Contes* (239-65), here cited. "L'Adroite Princesse" also appears in *NCF*, II, 78-117.

Perrault's concise "Les Fées," presents what his century conceived of as the "monde à l'envers," a female-ruled household governed by antithetical oppositions. The young *honnête* stepdaughter, the mirror portrait of her deceased father, is diametrically opposed to the ill-mannered, coarsely-spoken daughter of a wealthy widow. True to the tenets of French classicism, "Les Fées " illustrates a moral lesson which is nonetheless undercut by financial considerations, both in the body of the tale and in the second *moralité*. As noted in ch. II, the economic dimension of the tale influences the prince's materialist vision of the heroine while simultaneously depriving her of exemplary value

Fénelon's proscription of romances for future household managers—"Quel dégoût pour elle de descendre de l'héroisme jusqu'au plus bas détail du ménage"[74]—Lhéritier's feminist version of modernism commends the reading of novels while situating women and their fairy tales in the heart of *mondain* culture and at the source the French literary tradition. Perhaps a tributary of the essentialist view of women promulgated in men's writings on female nature, the modernist Lhéritier's view of women's authority is founded on their privileged rapport with "natural" eloquence, or "douceur." The mysteries of the female body which empowered women in the writings of Grenaille, Le Moyne, and Poullain, evolve while shedding their maternal aura. Women's essence, involving a communion with nature so perfect that it results in assimilation, dictates her linguistic prowess. In the able hands of Lhéritier, the essentialism inherent in the era's conception of female identity is transposed from the corporeal to the discursive mode, with the consequence that the maternal role is effaced by women's innate command of language.

Relying on an aesthetics of conflation, this adherent of modernism enlarges literary history to include women as the learned purveyors of a tradition with which they are at once complicit and wryly critical. Once their foothold in the literary field is secured through recourse to the *mondain* ideologies of inherent female superiority, women's advocates such as Lhéritier inevitably exceed the traditions that originally inspired their polemic. To illustrate the point, "Les Enchantements de l'éloquence," structured by a self-referential conversation between the narrator and her dedicatee Mme. d'Eperon, becomes a vehicle for publicizing female authorial identity. As Marc Fumaroli has demonstrated, Lhéritier's tale celebrates women's coming of literary age, whether she be the noble dedicatee or the bourgeois narrator.[75] For, although critical opinion has often interpreted this tale and others as a reaffirmation of the threatened aristo-

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as the representative of *honnêteté*. Lhéritier's "naturally" eloquent modernist heroine Blanche, whose empowerment is consolidated by an amplified text, contrasts markedly with Perrault's unnamed heroine, whose devalued subject status questions the very social code that she embodies.

[74] *De l'éducation des filles* (95).

[75] Fumaroli, " 'Les Fées' de Charles Perrault, ou de la littérature," 171.

cratic order,[76] I would argue that the preservation of tradition is undercut by a proselytizing intention that looks toward the future.

Fumaroli has maintained that the modernists most surely sought to propagate their aesthetic ideals beyond their own ideological borders. One need only recall that the salon, at once the birthplace of *mondain* culture and the fairy tales, operated on a *relatively* inclusive bias. Once deemed worthy of membership in this elite circle, the upwardly mobile not only assimilated aristocratic manners but also contributed, however subtly, certain of their own values. And although seventeenth-century literature was without question an elite phenomenon, it was nonetheless accessible to persons who demonstrated the ability to interiorize its principles.[77] Because of its status as an inverse educational treatise opposed to Fénelon's "De l'éducation des filles," "Les Enchantements" seeks to mold the future through the selective use of history.

According to Fumaroli, the title "Les Enchantements de l'éloquence" situates the narrative in the interstices between the spell of erudite rhetoric and the magic spells of the fairy tale. Irreverently associating the eloquence of learned humanist culture with the enchantment of fairy tales, the narrator distances eloquent expression from the scholarly tradition of the universities while simultaneously placing it at the center of *mondain* culture. In this tale born of the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, the French language is freed from Latin tutelage through the influence of the court conceived of as a "social and cultural intersection" characterized by a degree of social fusion (157-60). Modernist *mondain* ideology places women, the intermediaries through which linguistic authority passes from the ancient orators to the modern French tradition, at the center of this court. Embodying the triumph of modernity, the heroine Blanche is endowed by the suggestively named fairies Dulcicula and Eloquentia nativa with "doux langage," a synonym of the new eloquence associated with the conversation of court and salon.[78] In the course of the tale, oratorical prowess is transferred from "cet orateur tonnant qui était cependant si couru des Athéniens," to Blanche, whose "taste" and "talent" are esteemed "mille fois plus . . . que ceux de la rhétorique" (264). Indeed, Eloquentia nativa's gift is allegorized by the pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds that grace the heroine's every utterance.

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[76] For example, see Seifert, "The Rhetoric of *Invraisemblance*: 'Les Enchantements de l'éloquence,'" 126-28; 135.

[77] See Fumaroli's discussion, 185-86.

[78] To be sure, the antithesis between natural eloquence and learned rhetoric was considered a commonplace since Montaigne's *Essais*. See Fumaroli, 182. As Fumaroli and Seifert have observed, the heroine Blanche's speech evokes the ideals of seventeenth-century rhetoric. See Seifert, *FTSG*, 95.

Blanche's natural conversational style contrasts with that of her stepsister by misalliance, Alix, whose "jargon" and abrasive behavior is signified by the toads, serpents and spiders with which the same fairy has cursed her expression. Clearly, the negative portrayal of Alix and her mother, the rich widow of a financier, expresses the public's hostility toward the era's nouveaux riches. But it should be remembered that the animosity felt toward ostentatious parvenus was not restricted to any one class. Perhaps, as Fumaroli has suggested, the bourgeois narrator was more attached to the myth of aristocratic birth than the nobility itself. In seventeenth-century France, the noble myth is a reality that infuses both court and salon culture.

The blending of rhetoric and fairy tale suggested by the title initiates the tale's amplifying aesthetic, which is subsequently pursued through the narrator's conversational asides to her dedicatee. Shaped by a salon-inspired exchange, the telling of the tale necessarily mixes diegetic and contemporary frames, and in so doing deflates the story, a mere point of reference for the metanarrative commentary addressed to Mme. d'Eperon. Let us note that the critical consensus which objects to "Les Enchantements" on the ground that it is "dated" and of difficult access to the modern reader, is directly linked to the imagined dialogue between the two salonnières.[79] Indeed, this foregrounding of the art of conversation enables the narrator's staging of her writing persona, which is anchored by the one-sided exchange that blends story and contemporaneous references.

Insistently marked by 32 instances of the pronoun "je," Lhéritier's tale appears to be in competition with the showcasing of her own literary image. Such an assumption is validated by Emile Benveniste's work on "The Nature of Pronouns," which concludes that the speaker's enunciated "I" posits his or her subject identity in relation to an addressed "you," which cannot be dissociated from the *present* instance of discourse that defines them both.[80] Hence, the "dated" character not merely of this particular narrative but of women's tales in general, can suggest that they are inspired by an assertion of personal identity. "I" can, of course, be enunciated in a myriad of forms. While Lhéritier's narrative is unambiguously narcissistic, the *conteuses* often invent subtler means to draw attention to their writerly persona. In the present case, the persona that emerges is one of theoretician cum *salonnière*, a professional author who surreptitiously enters the academy door by disguising herself as a writer of fairy tales.

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[79] According to Fumaroli, "La nouvelle de Mlle. Lhéritier est plus ouvertement liée à tout un ordre de culture datée, qui en vieillissant rend moins perceptible l'allusif et l'allégorique dont son art narratif fait un tel usage" (184).

[80] Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 217-22.

Lhéritier's own place in literary history is secured at the very outset of the tale when she inscribes her autobiographical situation in a modernist version of the genre's female transmission.[81] First created by the troubadours, fairy tales follow an exclusively feminine route from the grandmothers to the *conteuses* through the intermediary of one "dame très instruite," presumably Lhéritier's tale-reciting governess. Since, in all likelihood, Lhéritier assumed that the troubadours consisted solely of male poets, her account of the genre's origin appears to combine the frontispiece of Perrault, who stressed the mediator role of the uneducated "meres grands," with that of Aulnoy, who highlighted women's erudition along with the genre's literary origin. To be sure, Lhéritier's "very learned woman," versed in both ancient and modern literature, is distinguished from Perrault's uncultivated female storyteller. Consistent with the tenets of male-created modernism, according to which women were the custodians of the cultural heritage, Lhéritier assigns a mediating role to women. Nonetheless, the role of the educated female in the *conteuse*'s genealogical drama is decisive.

It is because of women's erudition, which has increased through the centuries, from the grandmothers to the *femme savante*, that the cultural heritage has been both safeguarded and actively purveyed. Therefore, this *salonnière* embraced the modernist ideology of women's untutored eloquence, only to veer off into the radically opposed direction of female literacy and erudition. As we have seen, Lhéritier publicly celebrated the erudition of Scudéry and Deshoulières, all the while encouraging her salon colleagues to write in a genre supposedly free of pedantic influence. Indeed, the *conteuse*'s friendship with academicians such as Perrault suggests that the boundaries between salon and academy were perhaps more permeable than has been assumed.

Framed as it is by *mondain* ideals, Lhéritier's own foray into classical poetics does indeed suggest the resiliency of the limits that distinguished salon and academic concerns. A case in point, illustrative of a certain slippage from the academic theoretician Chapelain to the mondain theorist Scudéry, involves that moment in the narrative when Blanche's noble father enunciates an "apology of novels":

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[81] Faith Beasley examines the intersecting of autobiography and history in *Revising Memory*, 76-80. Lhéritier's own blending of personal story and literary history is tantamount to her claims of authorial status.

> la lecture des romans est en quelque façon meilleure que celle de l'histoire même, parce que l'histoire, étant entièrement assujettie à la vérité, présente quelquefois des images bien choquantes pour les moeurs. L'histoire peint les hommes comme ils sont, et les romans les représentent tels qu'ils devraient être, et semblent par là les engager d'aspirer à la perfection: du moins on ne peut nier que les romans bien faits n'apprennent le monde et la politesse du langage. (247)

In this passage, echoes of Chapelain—"l'histoire traite les choses comme elles sont et la poésie comme elles devraient être"—and Rapin—"la vérité ne fait pas les choses que comme elles sont; la vraisemblance les fait comme elles doivent être"[82]—resound together with intimations of Scudéry, whose conversation-filled novels are thought to have served as civility manuals for salon society. Surely, the alliances forged between the *nouveaux doctes* and the cultured elite produced intriguing mélanges. Although neither novel nor fairy tale achieved official recognition in the era's dominant poetics, this *conteuse* ennobles both by defining them according to the same criteria used for dramatic poetry. This theory-mediated dialogue between official and unrecognized genres prepares Lhéritier's ensuing metanarrative reflections, which explore what have long been recognized as the ambiguities of classical poetics.

Interwoven with an exposition of *vraisemblance*, Lhéritier's defense of the contemporary novel announces the first in a series of conversationally formulated theoretical speculations. Under the guise of laughter, this *salonnière* joins the illustrious ranks of the king's historiographers, which included her own father as well as Racine and Boileau:

> Vous trouverez peut-être, Madame, que le père de Blanche était un peu trop prévenu pour les romans . . . je raconte seulement ce que porte ma *chronique*: je suis *historienne* et une historienne aussi bien qu'un *historien* ne doit point prendre de parti. Ne badinez pas, je vous prie, sur ces

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[82] Chapelain, *Préface de l'Adone de Marin* (1623), quoted in Kibedi Varga, 190; Rapin, *Réflexions*, quoted in Kibedi-Varga, 197.

> réflexions, car si vous alliez perdre votre sérieux, vous me feriez perdre le mien aussi. Cependant, j'en ai bien besoin pour avoir la force de vous raconter tranquillement cette surprenante *histoire*. (248, emphasis added)

At one and the same time a chronicle (the faithfully transmitted story of the troubadour) and a fable (the fictional status of the transmitted document), Lhéritier's narrative blends the notions of historical truth and poetic verisimilitude which classical theoreticians sought, with varying degrees of success, to differentiate. Perrault's niece was surely not unaware of the ambiguities of classical poetology as reflected in the king's choice of poets such as Boileau and Racine to write the history of the monarchy. Playing homophonically on the term "histoire," which signifies at once "history" and "story," the *conteuse* profits from her association with learned academicians in order to illuminate the cracks in the armor of theoretical abstraction.

Classical poetics fell far short indeed of its universalistic pretensions. When Lhéritier claims the identity of "historienne," she good-humoredly and unobtrusively pushes her way into history which, as Richelet's exclusion of the feminine term indicates, was defined as a masculine domain. A true *précieuse*, this *salonnière* imagines a neologism that enables her to invent an identity in advance of her era. Just as she extends the historical domain to include the *historienne* or theorist with whom she identifies, Lhéritier enlarges literary history to encompass the numerous women writers of the historical novels then in vogue.

The preoccupation with history and origins is a logical component of this tale which, like other of Lhéritier's writings, stakes out a place for women in literature. Prepared from the tale's outset, where the merging of temporal zones problematizes even the generic incipit, the ambiguous delineation of history and fiction is pursued in three ensuing metanarrative addresses to Mme. d'Eperon. The *conteuse* qualifies her own version of "il était une fois" with the aside "(il est difficle de le marquer, ce temps-là, mais il n'importe)" (240). Conversational commentary laces the narrative with temporal markers that alternate between the "ce temps-là" of the fairy-tale and the "ce temps-ci" of salon society. Disruptive of diegetic linearity, women's conversation orients the reader's attention to the mechanics of composition, which, in a manner of speaking, discloses the subjective grounding of the text.

Finally, the discussion coalesces significantly around the tale's romantic intrigue, an indispensable and much-criticized element of both women's fairy tales and historical novels. Focusing on that point in the narrative when the heroine Blanche is mistakenly wounded by the hunting prince, Lhéritier questions the veracity of the chronicle which she is transcribing:

> *L'histoire dit que* les yeux de Blanche firent à leur tour une blessure au chasseur; mais *j'ai peine à croire* que ce fût dès ce permier moment; ou *si la chronique dit vrai*, il fallait que ce chasseur fût aussi aisé à prendre feu que son fusil. (250, emphasis added)

First of all, Lhéritier underscores the ambiguities of the notion of classical verisimilitude by constructing a narrative that embodies its problematic distinction between fable and chronicle, story and fact. Second, since the official rules seem inadequate, she relies on personal judgment—"j'ai peine à croire"—and thus annexes her particular opinion to the historical chronicle she is recounting.[83] When read in the context of her assertion that "un historien doit toujours dire la vérité, quoique j'en sache assez qui y manquent"(251), the *conteuse* can be seen to offer a polite challenge to the assumption of historical objectivity. Lhéritier's spirited irreverence highlights the question of subjectivity unaccounted for by the universalizing thrust of theory. Since the incursion of the personal into history coincides with the tale's brief allusion to the vagaries of sentiment, it suggests the fairy tale's affinity with women's novels, those "tender geographies" in which affairs of the heart are at one and the same time affairs of state. Tentative explorations of affectivity, women's historical novels did indeed mix fiction and history in the same way that Lhéritier's narrative joins chronicle to fable.

Nonetheless, Lhéritier's flirting with sentiment is abruptly undercut by her more pressing theoretical concerns, which include upstaging literary critics who would object to her anachronistic use of the term *fusil*:

> Je connais des savants si scrupuleux qu'ils ne laisseraient pas finir un conte sans se récrier sur cet anachronisme; mais si je voulais entrer en raison avec un censeur si peu sensé ne pourrais-je pas dire que *mesdames les fées* pouvaient bien avoir fait là quelqu'un de leur coups. On va voir bien d'autres merveilles . . . . (251, emphasis added)

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[83] See Beasley, 25. Beasley's entire analysis is very useful for understanding women writer's particular relationship to history.

In the manner of a wily strategist, this *salonnière* deflects their imagined censure back onto the "unreasonable" pedants who formulated it. For by criticizing her tale, they seem to have overlooked the hierarchy of genres which they themselves created; excluded from the officially sanctioned literary forms, the fairy tale should logically be exempted from the prescriptions of classical poetics. "Mesdames les fées," the very women writers who figure in Murat's fairy-tale manifesto, are not beholden to hierarchy and render impracticable all boundaries between "ci temps-ci" and "ce temps-là," fact and fiction, objectivity and subjectivity. The "historienne" Lhéritier, inspired by an autobiographical project, defends women's fairy tales against theoretical exclusion by imagining an inclusive poetics of conflation within an enlarged literary field.

SIGNING DOUBLE

In her eighty-seven page "La Princesse Belle-Etoile et le Prince Chéri" (*Les Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode*, III, 1698),[84] Aulnoy highlights her role as founder of the fairy-tale genre while claiming authorial responsibility for her work. Infused by the desire for self-assertion, diegetic and extra-diegetic levels intersect, the former concentrating on Belle-Etoile's quest for self-knowledge, the latter highlighting Aulnoy's own desire to be a publicly recognized writer. From the very beginning, this narrative is defined by an heuristic of disguise, which demands unmasking and thus facilitates the exploration of identity. Indeed, the term *feindre*, which as we have seen can signify both "dissimulation" and poetic invention, is obsessively reiterated throughout the entire narrative.[85]

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[84] Eustache Le Noble published his own considerably shorter version of tale type 707, "L'Oiseau de vérité," in *Le Gage touché* (1700). Disguise and unmasking play no role in this classically structured tale, whose male and female characters are delineated according to the conventional gender roles Le Noble outlined in his *L'Ecole du monde, ou Instruction d'un père à son fils* (1698). In his own version of Courtin's ultra-conservative *Traité de la jalousie*, Le Noble asserts that wives must never trespass on their husband's territory, since "Toutes choses mettent l'autorité du côté du mari" (*L'Ecole du monde*, quoted by Timmermans, 359). "L'Oiseau de véritié," true to Le Noble's didactic treatise, portrays the aristocratic brothers Beau Soleil and Bel Astre as accomplished warriors and hunters, while their sister Belle-Etoile is a perfect spinner. The latter seeks beauty, and even "esprit," meaning the intelligence appropriate to women, yet her identity is guaranteed by tradition and admits of no exploration. Indeed, the relative lack of female disguise in the men's tales read for this study, suggests that they are retrograde in comparison to the first part of the century when male novelists created the *femmes fortes* who appropriated at one and the same time gentlemanly attire and manly pursuits. Le Noble's diametrically opposed heroes and heroines perhaps reflect the official reinforcing of the distinctions between the sexes which historians and literary critics associate with the second half of the century. Le Noble's fairy tale can be read in Raymonde Robert's *Il Etait une fois des fées*, 81-90.

The heroine's own inventiveness is foretold by the ingenuity of her royal grandmother, who like the queen of "Finette Cendron," responds to poverty and exile by imagining a new identity for herself beyond the confines of the kingdom. Yet, the heroine and her grandmother have a quite distinct relationship to the court, which is despised by the elder and desired by the younger. Associated with deceptive intrigue by the older generation, the seat of royal authority is linked with power and self-assertiveness by Belle-Etoile, her two brothers Petit Soleil and Heureux, and her cousin Chéri. All four children are born at court shortly after their mothers leave the countryside to follow their royal husbands. However, because an evil queen casts them out to sea at birth, they are raised by commoners and cannot discover their rightful heritage until they take possession of the oracular green bird.

In order to focus on the heroine, Aulnoy imagines yet another version of the "démolition du héros" enacted in such tales as "Marcassin" and "L'Oiseau Bleu." Setting out in succession to capture the green bird, each of the three heroes fails and is plunged, paralyzed and speechless, into a large room where three hundred other knights arranged in crystal niches have encountered the same fate. Perhaps in good-humored retaliation for Richelet's commentary accompanying his definition of the hero, "On doute si une femme peut être l'héroïne d'un poème épique," Aulnoy takes her cue from the first part of the century when the *femme forte* was still a popular literary type. Once having immobilized the very concept of the hero by transforming its representatives into statues, Aulnoy, drawing on the traditions of pre-Fronde heroic novelists, disguises her heroine in male attire as the latter ventures forth to liberate all three-hundred odd knightly heroes and to successfully decipher the mystery of her origins.

Reminiscent of Aulnoy's savvy metamorphosed adventuresses, the transformed Belle Etoile commences her apprenticeship in the Cartesian "great book of the world." Similar to all respectable male aristocrats of her age, who believed that one learned more from travel than from study,[86] the heroine affirms her identity while at the same time confirming her adaptability. Once the evil queen and her ally Feintise have been expelled, the noble Belle-Etoile will reposition herself in the transformed court where her fate will perhaps depend on her continued ability to excel. Resembling countless noble fairy-tale heroines created by "mesdames les fées," Belle Etoile, driven by self-assertive ambition, embraces the changing order.

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[85] "*Feindre*" and its derivatives occur for a total of 45 times.

The narcissistic Aulnoy competes with her own heroine's desire for recognition and, in so doing, compensates for the incomplete title-page signature. Clearly, Belle-Etoile's quest for self-definition serves in itself to disguise Aulnoy's showcasing of her own authorial persona by directing the reader's attention away from this most self-centered of enterprises. Indeed, the heuristic of disguise initiated by the grandmother's assumed identity of cook announces the discordance between appearance and reality that threatens to undermine the narrative. Forcefully implied through the tale's two *mises en abyme*, the intersection of fiction and reality enable the reader to glimpse the armature of the text while participating in the dynamics of its fashioning.

Paradoxically, Aulnoy unsettles the fictional illusion by blending fairy tale and novel, that is, by inserting a romantic couple borrowed from one of her own historical novels in Belle-Etoile and Chéri's love story. Erroneously assuming that they are siblings, the hero and heroine are perplexed by their dissimulated romantic longing for one another. Then one day Belle-Etoile chooses from among several books a novel which recounts the adventures of two young lovers who are enabled to wed after discovering that they are not in fact brother and sister. Belle-Etoile passes the book to Chéri, who reads to her while she finishes her needlework:

> Il lut cette aventure & ce ne fut pas sans une grande inquiétude qu'il vit une peinture naïve de tous ses sentiments. Belle-Etoile n'étoit pas moins surprise; il sembloit que l'auteur avoit lu tout ce qui se passoit dans son âme. (200)

Given that the situation of the novel couple reflects the dilemma of the fairy-tale lovers, the novel can be considered a replica of the tale plot. Therefore the reader, already alerted to the process of textual composition, is doubly attentive when he or she discovers that the novelist who so realistically depicts characters' interior sentiments—"une peinture naïve de tous ses sentiments"—is none other than Aulnoy herself.

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[86] See Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, 189; Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*, 87.

Letting the book fall from his grasp in a moment of genuine emotion, Chéri addresses the following commentary to his supposed sister: "ah, ma soeur, qu'Hypolite fut heureux de n'être pas le frère de Julie!" (201). Significantly, Hypolite and Julie are the main characters of Aulnoy's enormously successful and oft-reprinted *Histoire d'Hypolite, comte de Duglas* (1690), the novel in which was embedded the first published French fairy tale. For the contemporary reader undoubtedly familiar with Aulnoy's novel, the allusion to Hypolite and Julie functions like a signature whereby the *conteuse* announces her role in shaping both novel and tale. Moreover, since the *mise en abyme* of the story is immediately followed by that of the enunciatory situation, the spectator-reader witnesses Aulnoy's dramatic signing via her intertextual characters at that very point in the textual economy where novel and fairy tale intersect. Written simultaneously across two genres, Aulnoy's signature reflects women's own integration of novelistic elements in their tales while suggesting that both genres belong to the same female literary tradition. Indeed, when one notes that the novel *Hypolite* reverses "Belle Etoile"'s narrative practices by including the embedded fairy tale "L'Ile de la félicité," it appears that the contempt for hierarchy is a defining mark of this tradition.

Such a disrespect for the prerogatives of genre is expressed within the embedded tale itself, whose romantic hero Adolphe's tenuous grasp of reality dooms him to perish. While deviating from the typically active fairy-tale hero, Adolphe is merely one of Aulnoy's many characters who are either derided or disposed of due to their propensity for illusion. Yet another indication of the problematic status of "L'Ile de la félicité," is its pessimistic portrayal of love, which while common in women's novels of the latter part of the century, is considered aberrant in regard to the fairy-tales genre.[87] Such crisscrossing of literary genres is further compounded when one recalls that "Belle-Etoile" is embedded in the above-discussed *Gentilhomme bourgeois*. Along with other classicists, Guez de Balzac, who believed that "chaque genre se doit contenter du sien, que de démarquer les bornes qui séparent les frontières, c'est commencer le désordre et la confusion,"[88] would clearly not have approved. Yet, as we have seen, the poetics of women's fairy-tale writing operates on an inclusive principle that seems to mime the salon's own function as it eludes and sometimes challenges academic speculation on literary creation. However suggestive, Aulnoy's recognition of a female tradition is clearly subordinated to her individual claim to writerly fame. By alluding to the very novel that included the first French fairy tale, Aulnoy boldly publicizes herself not only as a best-selling novelist but also as the originator of the fairy-tale genre. What, then, has become of the *pudeur* so celebrated in men's writings on the nature of women?

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[87] With rare exceptions such as "Le Mouton," the vast majority of Aulnoy's tales betray a certain optimism. However, the *conteuse* is ruthless in her scorn for those who persist in mistaking illusion for reality. To illustrate the point, one need only recall her direct or implicit parodies of d'Urfé's shepherds and shepherdesses, a disabused perspective that informs more than a few of her tales. My own reading of Aulnoy's use of pastoral topoï differs significantly from that of Seifert, who views the country retreat in "Belle Etoile" and other tales as a nostalgic space for reaffirmation of an "obscured"

THE CHÂTEAUX OF FAIRY-TALE WRITING

Published together with "Le Roy Porc" in the 1699 *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques*,[89] "Le Sauvage" is at once a defense of aristocratic lineage,[90] a eulogy of the monarchy, and a barely dissimulated critique of patriarchal authority figures.[91] Charting an ambitious itinerary, "Le Sauvage" maps

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aristocratic identity. According to Seifert, the self-affirmation one finds in the fairy tales is clearly related to the diminished status of the nobility, who seek a compensatory satisfaction. *FTSG*, 82-84. While the self-assertive project is tantamount, I argue that it need not be interpreted as compensatory but rather as appropriative. In my perspective, fairy-tale retreats provide far more than the reaffirmation of an aristocratic essence; they engage the heroes and especially the heroines in the exploration of alternative life-styles that double as apprenticeships and prove the adaptability of the aristocracy to changing circumstances.

[88] Balzac, "Dissertation de critique," 1665, *Oeuvres*, II (Geneva, 1971) 570. Quoted by Floeck, *L'Esthétique de la diversité*, 203.

[89] This tale is unavailable in a modern version. I quote from the 1699 Florentin and Delaulne edition.

[90] On the defense of lineage in "Le Sauvage," see Cromer, "'Le Sauvage': Histoire sublime et allégorique de Madame de Murat," 12.

[91] Jean de Mailly's shorter version of tale type 502, "Le Prince Guérini" (*Les Illustres fées, contes galans*, 1698. *NCF*, VI, 72-90) extols the virtues of court ideology by focusing on a reverse metamorphosis and its positive consequences. Practicing a kind of one-upmanship in the assimilation of difference, this eminently didactic tale

the disguised heroine Constantine's journey from a foreign court where she proves her chivalric prowess to her final destination at the fairy Obligeantine's magical château. There, in a wondrous rendition of the seventeenth century *cabinet*, a private room for study and writing, both fairy and heroine imagine their way to the summits of monarchic power.

The unsettling of hierarchies, the keystone of Murat's "Aux Fées modernes", is accomplished in "Le Sauvage" by targeting male heads of household who appear oblivious to the threat their unconsidered actions pose to the interests of family lineage. Indeed, Murat paradoxically intersperses her lavish praise of Louis XIV with an indictment of paternal and fraternal bad judgment and obstinacy. Rejecting the era's consensus that "Il n'y a proprement que les femmes qui se mes-allient,"[92] Murat, through her emboldened heroine, blames male royalty for the nefarious consequences of misalliance. Therefore, her ostensible praise of the Sun King's accomplishments is substantially undercut by the degraded portrait of his fairy-tale equivalent. Murat's version of Dewald's "deadly parents," those patriarchal literary figures who endanger personal autonomy,[93] centers its critique on King Richardin, the heroine's father. Having exhausted his fortune by marrying off three ugly daughters, Richardin destines his beautiful and intelligent daughter Constantine to a suitor unworthy of her noble heritage. Rather than marry beneath her and suffer the consequences of derogation, Constantine symbolically usurps her father's power by donning his attire and taking flight.

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highlights the civilizing benefits of *honnêteté*. A savage, instructed in the ways of the nobility by a generous fairy, puts his newly acquired expertise to work by subduing a horde of giants and by inducting King Philippe's son Guérini into noble manhood. Although this tale articulates the conflict between the heroic ideal of the independent aristocrat and that of the courtier, it is the latter which dominates the tale. Offering a series of reiterated lessons in courtly protocol, Mailly elides the notion of gallant love to emphasize instead the aristocratic respect for the imperatives of lineage. King Philippe, loathe to practice gallantry, is above all a loving husband and father. In opposition to the explorative dimension involved in animal metamorphosis and disguise, "Guérini" transforms nature into culture. Indeed, one might say that Mailly's tale reflects the socialization process while recalling La Bruyère's description of the daunting task which confronted those who aspired to noble ideals of comportment: "Combien d'art pour rentrer dans la nature! Combien de temps, de règles, d'attention et de travail pour danser avec la même liberté et la même grâce que l'on sait marcher" ("Des Jugements," *Les Caractères*).

[92] Le Sieur de Mainville, *Du bonheur et du malheur dans le mariage*, 74.

[93] See ch. II.

According to Gayle Brunelle, the heroine's protest against the abuse of the prerogatives of paternal authority was not unknown to her seventeenth-century counterparts. Indeed, an examination of the letters for relief from derogation written by widows who had been forced by male kin into marriages that tainted their honor, offers evidence that women were not hesitant to express their dissatisfaction with the social system that favored sons over daughters and older daughters over younger ones.[94] Since Constantine's defense of aristocratic lineage is intertwined with her disguise, which inherently involves the exploration of alternative identities, her desire to affirm noble status need not be considered retrograde.[95] Instead, the heroine's claim to prestigious birth, associated as it is with the experimental space of disguise, includes the envisioning of an unknown future. To an important degree, Constantine can be said to represent the imperious demands of female ambition.

The heroine's transvestite adventure is prepared from the tale's outset by a lengthy description of her bisexual qualities, which enable her to excel in a variety of endeavors including horsemanship, swordsmanship, and embroidery. Described as a veritable "*prodige* de perfection," that which can be both marvelous and monstrous,[96] Constantine implicitly partakes of her ugly sisters' monstrosity through the blending of opposites characteristic of what Maclean has defined as baroque feminism . The heroine's unnatural duplicity does indeed appear to circumvent the sexual hierarchies that support the notion of social verisimilitude espoused by the prescriptive literature on women. Her transgressive nature is underscored by the masculinized namesake "Constantin," by which the narrator designates the rebellious daughter during the course of her escapades at the court of the Sicilian king and his sister Fleurianne. Referring to the transvestite heroine as "il" and "le," the text winds teasingly in and out of sexual identities as Princess Fleurianne falls in love with Constantine's mask of virility. In much the same way that Constantine's transvestitism is a disguise that disturbs and consequently broadens conceptions of sexual identity, love, or more accurately affectivity, unsettles polarities and exceeds convention. Evocative of a certain irrationality, both disguise and sentiment delineate exploratory spaces in the textual economy.

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[94] Brunelle, "Dangerous Liaisons: *Mésalliance* and Early Modern French Noblewomen," 97. According to Brunelle, women were neither impassive nor meek in expressing their dismay at being forced to marry below their station. Once the non-noble husband was deceased, women did not hesitate to complain bitterly about the system that cost them their noble dignity.

[95] In *Le Roi machine*, Apostolidès interprets Murat's tales as a fictional version of Louis XIV's court such as it was during the first part of his glorious reign.

[96] According to Furetière, the term "*prodige*" defines all that which is extraordinary, whether monstrous or marvelous.

A case in point involves the enamored Princess Fleurianne, whose profound attachment for the disguised Constantin is evidence that personal abnegation in the higher interest of submission to noble honor can be undercut by the desire for self-expression and mastery of one's fate. Deeply moved by her attraction to Constantin, the royal Fleurinanne argues the case for misalliance—"le choix d'une Princesse peut faire un Prince d'un homme auquel il ne manque que cette qualité d'estre digne d'elle" (25-26). Reiterating the exact situation which forced Constantine to depart from her father's kingdom, the narrator portrays a semi-recalcitrant Fleurianne, who regrets that her brother the king has decreed her marriage to a "monster": "lors que l'on est obligé de passer sa vie avec un monstre quelqu'autre belle qualité qu'il puisse avoir, l'on est bien à plaindre" (24). Yet, although the sentimental territory insistently staked out by women novelists is surely the point at which the observance of familial allegiance may be seen to falter, in the last resort the timid Fleurianne upholds the system that validates her own privileged status:

> Oüy, cher Constantin, vous avez toute ma tendresse, & si j'étois la maîtresse de mon sort, je ne balancerois pas un moment à vous prendre pour mon époux, mais puisque je ne le puis faire sans manquer à ce que je dois, je suis resoluë à n'estre jamais à d'autre. (26)

Fleurianne stops short of abandoning noble values, but not before the aristocratic "civilization of love" inspires her to imagine beyond the strictures that circumscribe it.

Eventually, Constantine is forced to flee Sicily for having killed Fleurianne's designated suitor in a duel provoked by the latter. Mounted on the magic steed Embletin, Constantine is whisked away to the fairy Obligeantine's castle. There, in a *cabinet* situated at the end of a splendid hall equally reminiscent of a seventeenth-century townhouse and Versailles, Obligeantine demonstrates "l'art de Férie," which alone can surpass court magnificence: "La Fée avoüa qu'il n'y avoit que l'art de Férie qui pût surpasser la magnificence de cette Cour" (44). Composed of clouds which are transformed into tableaux inspired by a flick of the fairy's magic wand, this *cabinet* of writing can be seen to symbolize the site of invention for women fairy-tale writers. With wand for pen and clouds for ink, Ogligeantine stands in for "mesdames les fées" as she composes her "figures" representing the Sun King's achievements, an unofficial version of Le Brun's "Histoire du Roy."

If, as Apostolidès has observed, the seventeenth-century château of Versailles replaced the medieval cathedral as the center of all meaning,[97] women's sumptuous fairy-tale palaces infuse their own narratives with the motifs of power, all the while undermining the latter with a perceptible challenge of its abuses. In the process of this symbolic appropriation of wealth, the meaning of power itself is rendered problematic through the interlacing of panegyric and critique. As Boileau was among the first to observe, women's meddling in history, at the time a power base of male privilege, could undermine the moral foundations of the state. Inspired by women's *nouvelles historiques*, or historical novels, Obligeantine's rendition of history recalls Aulnoy's own "Biche au bois," which implements the merging of historical event and sentiment by recalling the marriage of Marie-Adelaide of Savoy to the Duke of Burgundy.

So attractive is this event to Constantine and Obligeantine that they benefit from the latter's powers to render themselves invisible in order to attend the ceremony. Under the cloak of invisibility, these female characters literally push their way into the historical tableau while symbolically expressing their desire to share in the king's power:

> La Fée poussoit les officiers qui portoient les corbeilles du desert . . . . Comme elles sortoient de la Chambre, le Roi en sortit aussi, & Constantine courant pour dire quelque chose à Obligeantine, elle poussa le Roi sans y penser . . . . (44)

This incursion into politics, which coincides with a potential sentimental intrigue, mirrors women's own entry into literary history via the historical novel. That Constantine and the fairy are invisible as they elbow royal officers and king alike, further links them to the many women novelists and fairy-tale writers who preferred anonymity to signing. Indeed, this hidden yet perceptible entry into the monarch's château can be related to the majority of women writers who, as Erica Harth has described it, "signed in invisible ink."[98] As specifically regards women's fairy tales, the invisible status of Constantine and Obligeantine can represent the absent title-page signature, whereas the couple's nudging of the king and his entourage can refer to the internal textual signs that affirmed the *conteuses*' authorial presence.

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[97] Apostolidès, 108.

Finally, both heroines retire to an invisible château near Marly, Louis XIV's alternative residence to Versailles. In a letter to Racine dated August 28, 1687, Boileau thus described this royal dwelling where only the king's intimates were welcome: "c'est un véritable lieu d'enchantement. Je ne doute point que les fées n'y habitent." A wealth so fantastic as to seem irreal does indeed conjoin the fairies' domain and the house of the King. At a time when immeasurable riches were increasingly becoming not only a sign of power but also the means to its realization, it is logical that women writers of the fairy tale would incorporate the trappings of wealth to secure their own quest for authority. I would argue that the fairy castles replete with unimaginable quantities of precious materials are indicative of a seditious dimension largely overlooked by literary critics. Reminiscent of Bluebeard's own dazzling display of affluence, the *conteuses*' accumulation of riches mirrors that of the very parvenus whose mores were reputedly antithetical to the "exclusive" kingdom of women's fairy-tale writing.

Clearly, the hyperbolizing of luxury had much to do with the desire for power and perhaps relatively little to do with eulogizing the monarchy. Excluded by Salic law from the innermost workings of power, these tale-telling *salonnières* fashion their ornate châteaux of fairy-tale writing in order to rival Louis XIV's magnificent residences[99] while competing with the official artists who immortalized his reign. The artistry of "mesdames les fées," whether it be epitomized by the "petite république" of "Serpentin Vert," the palatial site of invention in "Chatte Blanche," the indefinable "quelque chose de féerie" of "Marcassin," or the "art de Férie" of "Le Sauvage," reaffirms prestigious class identity with a nod in the direction of the monarchy, all the while expressing the desire to become one's own authority figure.

In conclusion, then, women's fairy tales substituted their own signature for the portrait offered by men's writings on their nature. As the new prestige of literature made itself felt, the nuclear family imagined by men gave way to the salon household devised by women, a family of sorts with evident sororal overtones. In the course of the itinerary from a masculine to a feminine perspective on *le sexe*, supposed female *pudeur* gave way to women's quite immodest public engagement in the newly emerging field of literature. Publicly acclaimed by the *Mercure* and openly disparaged by Villiers, women writers were applauded by literary academies and disdained by moralizing erudites. Whether consecrated or defamed, the female author was under the scrutiny of the public eye. Elliptical signatures encouraged public discussion of literature while unabashedly highlighting the female writerly persona. The salon, a focal point of modernism imbued with a somewhat paradoxical feminism, espoused in part the notion of a female essence as set forth in the texts examined in the initial chapter of this book. Yet, the *salonnières* temporarily avoided this problematical essentialism by emphasizing women's (innate) authorial powers while denying through omission the question of maternity.

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[98] Harth, *CW*, 46.

[99] Fouquet's own arrest in 1664 for having dared to construct a residence rivaling that of the king gives evidence that the display of incredible riches could be interpreted as a threat to the monarch.

A crossroads of social assimilation and mobility, the *ruelle* at once accepted and transformed women's mediating role in culture by imperceptibly blending conversation and writing, both of which came to be designated as appropriately female activities. Once the strictures of salon protocol encountered the unpredictability of writing, the latter often exceeded the former in such a way as to manifest women's own brand of modernism, a feminist version with a defiantly assertive ring. Ostensibly insouciant regarding the demands of their art, women's consistent invocation of the aesthetic of negligence can in itself be qualified as ostentatious. Clearly, the authorial persona that emerges from the showcasing of the interior signature at times challenges the very aesthetic it claims to embrace. The inclusive poetics of women's fairy-tale writing can be seen as a kind of discursive double for the salon dynamic of beneficial social exchanges and the transformations they entail. One might surmise that the primary effect of salon collaboration in the later seventeenth-century was to encourage women to seek individual authorial responsibility for their works. Theoretician, celebrated author, transvestite adventuress, the heroines of Lhéritier, Aulnoy, and Murat appear to share little common ground with the portraits of the increasingly domesticated female invented by Grenaille, Le Moyne, and even Poullain.

Afterword

In the last decade of the French seventeenth century, at a time when the notion of social *vraisemblance* tended toward ideological censure,[1] many aristocratic salon women and their elite associates embraced a genre that at once confirmed and threatened their superiority while rejecting the closure of the past. "Réprimez sévèrement toutes leurs fantaisies," warned Fénelon. For what Bernard called "the marvels of imagination," intertwined as they often were with the expression of interiority or "natural sentiments," created fairy-tale heroines who experimented with autonomy at a time when noble ideology increasingly stressed the imperatives of lineage. In a significant number of these narratives, imbued with the contradictions that characterized noble identity at a transitional moment of the Ancient Regime, women writers destabilize conventional identities through disguise and metamorphosis while laying the groundwork for alternative representations of subjectivity. Among the latter, the rudimentary delineation of the private self merits our sustained attention.

In opposition to the reigning critical perspective that envisions the phenomenon of seventeenth-century fairy-tale writing as an exclusively compensatory and even retrograde gesture affirming the threatened status of elite social groups,[2] my analyses suggest instead that the fairy-tale vogue is in large part compatible with the growing emphasis on sincerity in novels, memoirs, and letters of the latter part of the century.[3] While nostalgic echoes are not absent, I would argue that, in both women's narratives and those of Perrault, they are counterbalanced and even outweighed by a certain pragmatism that competes with and at times overwhelms underlying idealistic tendencies.[4] In order to clarify my position, let us briefly examine the arguments that focus on those narrative features which apparently secure the tales in either the nostalgia of the past or the closure of the present.[5]

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[1] See Kibedi-Varga, *Les Poétiques du classicisme*, 40-42. Kibedi-Varga notes that the marvelous plays a minimal role in Aristotle's *Poetics*, but that it assumes a privileged place when the strictures of social *vraisemblance* become oppressive (42).

[2] See, for example, Robert, *Le Conte de fées littéraire en France*, 327; 389.

[3] The trend toward sincerity is affirmed in DeJean's *Tender Geographies*, Dewald's *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*, Goldsmith's *Exclusive Conversations,* and Hipp's *Mythes et réalités*.

Although recently recognized as reductive, Paul Hazard's thesis on the seventeenth-century vogue of tale writing appears pivotal for the directions fairy-tale scholarship has taken up to the present day. A matrix from which diverging interpretations have branched out, Hazard's theory has nurtured the critical consensus that this particular literary production is inextricably linked to the declining powers of the era's nobility. Succinctly stated, Hazard evokes the austere and morose climate of the waning years of the century, which he contrasts with the creation of a magical universe that compensates for the dreariness that has overtaken the court at Paris and Versailles.[6]

Hazard's hypothesis is significantly modified if not rejected by Robert, who describes the tales as an idealized mirror of contemporary elite culture, and by Seifert, who rightly emphasizes the ways in which these narratives produced meaning and shaped the cultural sphere. Yet, the compensatory argument initially posited by Hazard and Storer, which tends not to challenge our preconceptions of the ways in which the nobility dealt with the era's redistribution of political, economic, and social power, unduly colors our perceptions of this admittedly aristocratic literary phenomenon. Stressing the demoralization of a disheartened aristocracy, literary history has been slow to recognize what historians have described as the adaptability of the elite class, which imagined creative solutions to meet the demands of the changing order. In consequence, past and present critical wisdom has been inclined to interpret the tales as an expression of the nobility's yearning for a bygone situation of prominence. While not without merit, the argument for nostalgia tends to lock these narratives into an outmoded frame not easily reconcilable with the production of new meanings.

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[4] Lewis Seifert is of the opposite persuasion. Elaborating his thesis of the dialectic between nostalgic and utopic longings that inform the tales, Seifert asserts that "All in all nostalgia outweighs utopic longings" (*Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender*, 222).

[5] Even though Seifert and Robert seem to be at odds in that Seifert stresses nostalgic features, whereas Robert emphasizes the idealized portrait of the contemporary scene, both critics underplay the outward thrust and ensuing movement which, according to my analyses, mark both women's and Perrault's tales.

[6] *La Crise de la conscience européenne*, 335-36.

Perhaps the most prominent illustration of the nostalgic thesis involves the fairy tales' affinities with the heroic and pastoral novels of the earlier part of the century. As a case in point, Seifert has convincingly argued that the tales' incorporation of novelistic topoï, including pastoral settings, depictions of tender and gallant love, idealized characters, marriage closures, and chivalric heroes, set them in diametrical opposition to the more realistic novellas of the latter part of the century. In Seifert's perspective, the literary fairy tale adopts "a backward-looking vision" that rejects individualism while espousing the earlier ideals of sociability and *honnêteté*.[7]

However, my analyses show that the tale narratives' inevitable dialogue with prior literary traditions does not necessarily relegate this literature to an outdated aesthetic or world view. Indeed, the inscription of putatively retrograde narrative elements is compatible with the forward thrust which markedly characterizes women's tales (and those of Perrault). As we have seen, Aulnoy's pastoral settings are infused with a strong parodic dimension that often dismisses heroic ideals as both foolhardy and dangerous. A heady dose of realism shatters bucolic bliss, whether envisioned by the animalistic Marcassin or the delicate King Mouton. Lest one forget, Aulnoy emphatically rejects the chivalric hero when "Belle Etoile"'s three knights are overtaken by paralysis.[8]

As I have maintained in this study, the representation of love in both Bernard and especially Aulnoy ventures beyond the heroic commonplaces of the era's popular romances. While Bernard's amorous pessimism is consistent with the portrayal of love in the novellas, Aulnoy imaginatively showcases an optimistic form of love remarkably divorced from the frame of sociability inherent in earlier conceptions of *amour tendre*. Neither *tendre* nor *galant*, Aulnoy's solitary lovers, whose metamorphoses enhance physical demonstrativeness, address the question of individual autonomy, itself inseparable from the affective dimension. And although the marriage ending is the norm for the *conteuses*' narratives, it should be underscored that this resolution is in all instances related to the heroine's assertion of her right to determine her own destiny. Since heroines wed the suitors of their choosing, women's tales highlight the role of affectivity in assuring personal happiness. Therefore, the conventional marriage closure, often qualified as regressive, is rather indicative of a new interest in the private realm.[9] Clearly, the expression of individualistic tendencies can assume many aesthetic and narrative forms.

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[7] Seifert, 76-78; 80-81; 110; 113-16; 149-56. Although Seifert conceives of the tales as predominantly nostalgic, he does not neglect their "utopic" or forward-looking aspect. The latter, Seifert clarifies, is linked to the fairy tales' exploration of alternative sexual and gender identities. To his credit, Seifert denies the supposed "closure" of this literary production, yet he underscores the tales' inscription of "exclusive sociability."

[8] According to Seifert, the chivalric hero, normative in tale narratives, contrasts with the *honnête* homme. Yet, I would argue that both the knight and his later counterpart are conjoined by their amorous discourse, which enthrones the lady while highlighting the formative role she plays in the shaping of the hero's identity. And while Seifert opposes *honnête* self-interest to the troubadour's self-effacement, I would emphasize that, although the chivalrous knight put his lady on a pedestal, he remained in control; like its gallant counterpart, the *Fin amors*, based on personal choice rather than family dictates, was a construction both refined and noble. To be sure, there were many strains of courtly love. However, for both *courtois* and *honnête* lover, women were central to male identity. For Seifert's position, see 149-156.

In conjunction with the novelistic motifs discussed above, the tales' integration of luxury and wealth has been interpreted, first and foremost by Robert, as the metaphoric validation of the status of an aristocracy newly deprived of its traditional means of self-assertion. Emphasizing the "ostentatiously exterior character" of what she describes as the collective endeavor of the first vogue of tale writing, Robert hypothesizes that this literary expression may be thought of as an idealized mirror of the class that produced it.[10] Seifert, who concurs with Robert's analysis, elaborates that the tales "reify the contingencies of *mondain* culture into the certainty of aristocratic essence."[11] Although I do not dispute the self-affirming aspect of the vogue, I argue that the incorporation of fabulous riches which distinguishes women's fairy tales points to the involvement of the nobility (and their associates) in the uncertainties of change initiated by the evolving economic and political situation.

The precious stones, materials, and objects that proliferate in this literature imply far more than a static embodiment of aristocratic worth. Indeed, one need only summon Perrault's *Contes* to confirm that, during the second half of the century, immense fortune was not the exclusive marker of the aristocracy. On the contrary, luxury was also associated with financiers and other parvenus whose money guaranteed their social mobility. Emulating those persons who bought their way to power, women writers suffuse their tales with the trimmings of sumptuousness in order to secure a measure of symbolic authority in the emerging order of things. The stockpiling of opulence has a seditious ring that echoes the upsurge of arrivistes. Given that the hyperbolic affluence typical of the *conteuses*' narratives can relate equally to the active quest for power as well as to the reasserting of a weakened aristocratic ethos, I would conclude that the fairy tales' inscription of wealth is far more complex and surely more dynamic than has been recognized by contemporary scholarship. Evoking abundance at every turn, women's narratives, offered through the very fact of their publication to an undetermined public, can be linked to the extending of aristocratic culture to upwardly mobile social groups.

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[9] See *FTSG*, 113-116; 129 for Seifert's analysis of love and marriage in the tales.

[10] Robert, 364.

[11] Seifert, 84. It should be noted that Seifert is critical of the thesis that the tales are but the reflection of the aristocratic class. Indeed, as already mentioned, he asserts that the tales actively contribute to shaping the culture that nurtured them.

Why did women writers turn their creative efforts toward the fairy-tale genre at this particular historical moment? Seifert pertinently responds that the genre enabled the *conteuses* to reaffirm their role in the shaping of *mondain* culture while aligning themselves with the modernist stance in the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.[12] Yet, modernist culture would seem to be at odds with what Seifert describes as the "exclusive sociability" embodied in the tales. From the evidence, fairy-tale poetics, as envisioned by the modernists Lhéritier and Murat, is affiliated with the century's major literary quarrel. However, since the very nature of the polemic reaches out to engage controversy and in so doing encounters the unpredictable, it is difficult to reconcile this outward thrust with the notion of an exclusive, hermetically sealed fairy-tale universe.[13]

Although women write to confirm their cultural prominence while parrying the increasing attacks against them, this response is not limited to the reiteration of a situation of lost eminence. Rather, the *conteuses* adopt the modernist cause with an eye to expanding their influence by engaging a potential audience through their published works. The recourse to folklore, often explained as a nostalgic gesture, can equally be interpreted as a tactical maneuver. Profiting from the lessons of court politics, women summon the folkloric heritage in order to situate their authorial portraits within a nationalistic context.

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[12] Seifert, 85-96.

[13] The tenacious notion of the exclusivity of the aristocratic group, while not invalid, is much overworked. This long-held perception surely influences the prevalent consensus regarding the "exclusive" fairy-tale universe envisioned by aristocratic women and their associates. Yet, as James Collins has observed, social mobility was a constant of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in France: "The French nobility, far from being a closed caste, was a remarkably open elite" (*The State in Early Modern France*, 42).

The *salonnières*' marked predilection for the fairy-tale genre can be explained in part by the fact that this particular literary form is quite compatible with the self-portrait.[14] By definition, fairy tales are stories of becoming that encompass both transformation and adaptation. Propitious to the expression of individuality, the *conte de fées* impels a departure from the family understood as heredity, tradition, and the past. At the very moment when the era's prescriptive literature celebrates maternity and the home-bound female of Perrault's *Apologie* vies for prominence with the cultivated society lady,[15] women affirm their writerly personas while inventing heroines who forsake domesticity in the interests of ambition and individual autonomy.[16]

The emerging interest in the personal is an outstanding characteristic of these tales which emanated from the salon, whose conformist tendencies have been studied in recent scholarship.[17] However, if one concedes with Lougee that the salon perpetuated aristocratic culture,[18] and if one agrees with Timmermans that the *mondain* feminism it espoused was in large part compatible with absolutist goals,[19] it is nonetheless difficult to maintain that the salon's undeniable constraints were incompatible with dissent,[20] at least in the last years of the century. At this time, women's fairy tales, inspired by the salon circle, symbolically expand its circumference through writing. While one might discern a curious link between the mysterious engendering body of the tracts on female nature and the "natural" eloquence of *mondain* feminism, the latter enabled salon women to enter the literary field without appearing to disturb the established order.[21]

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[14] As Dewald has noted, "Presentation of the self in written form . . . became something of a fashionable mania in seventeenth-century Paris. Even the highest nobles eagerly sought occasions to see themselves . . . in print" (199).

[15] Lougee notes that, although the family was frequently opposed to aristocratic sociability, both nobles and bourgeois embraced the ethic of family life. Given the fluid boundaries between nobles and high bourgeois, one cannot associate the emerging interest in family life with only one of these entities. *Le Paradis des femmes*, 93.

[16] Seventeenth-century women's distrust of maternity is comprehensible when one considers that women's lives were at risk each time they gave birth. For an illuminating discussion of women's uneasy relation to maternity, *see* Michèle Sarde, "Le rejet de la maternité," *Regard sur les Françaises*, 430-33. On salon women's fairy tales, see "Le temps de l'ascétisme: Les princes Cochon," 402-65.

[17] Two notable exceptions include DeJean and Faith Beasley, *Revising Memory*.

[18] Lougee, 212. Lougee stresses that a prominent function of the seventeenth-century salon was to encourage social mobility, yet, she argues that the goal of the salon, which sought to perpetuate aristocratic culture, was to reinforce rather than eliminate hierarchy.

[19] See Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture*, 338. According to Timmermans, the salon did not challenge the established order, since the absolutist project of subduing the monarchy presupposed salon feminism.

Women penetrate the domain of publishing because they define their works as *divertissements*, and thus seemingly affirm their mediating yet subordinate cultural role according to the tenets of seventeenth-century modernism. Nonetheless, the ideal of sociability that inspired these salon women is challenged in the very process of their writing by the new values of personal expression and autonomy.[22] In virtue of their presumably innate gifts for "natural" eloquence, women were poised for experimenting with new modes of intimate expression. The seventeenth-century *conteuses* elect the risk involved in the unpredictability of writing and publication over the nostalgia so long attributed to a presumably dejected aristocracy.[23] However tentatively, these women writers embrace the future through the enchanted, disguised, and amorous bodies that forego the *pudeur* of Lescale's "mute rhetoric" to explore alternative identities for a changing order. As the prior in Aulnoy's *Le Gentilhomme bourgeois* so aptly evaluated the inventive talents of Aulnoy's alter ego, the tale-writer Virginie: "On lui donne le don de faire des contes, & vous ne savez pas où cela va" (289).

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[20] See Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women*, 54-63. In Harth's perspective, the salon did not participate in the tradition of dissent which she links to the era's academies. The pages indicated give a valuable account of salon constraints.

[21] Timmermans asserts that women's new role in literature was enabled by the their highlighting of the difference between the sexes (818).

[22] Citing Madame de Sévigné's letter enjoining her daughter to preserve a "natural" writing style, Dewald observes that such advice claimed to "detach writing from its collective setting. The good [aristocratic] writer was to express an inner nature, without regard to external conventions." Therefore, adds Dewald, it is not surprising that Rousseau, himself an advocate of "natural" writing, linked his own ideas on writing to those of seventeenth-century court society (194).

[23] Dewald expounds on the unpredictable nature of writing and its consequences for aristocratic writers of memoirs on 202-04. According to Dewald, the century viewed writing as a stimulus to the passions (176). Writing could confirm aristocratic identity, but its dominant effect was to destroy hierarchy (203). Dewald understands writing as "an escape from collective constraints" (203), but qualifies this flight as a "retreat to private selfhood" (206) rather than as a turning back to the past (and, I would add, to the cult of sociability).

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